day, February 22, 19



Kissing Selleck is ... bad, but Meg Ryan is better — Kline

PARIS (AFP) — K... macho actor Tom Sellec... "not bad" according to... co-star Kevin Kline ... Meg Ryan is better ki... told the French cine... magazine Premiere ... opinion when asked ab... a scene in his latest mov... "In and Out" in which h... kissed on the lips by ... star of the television ser... Magnum. Kline, who pl... a gay teacher in the fi... said he is always be... asked about the ki... previously starred ... Ryan in the film "Fre... Kiss".

Banderas to direct Griffith

LOS ANGELES (AFP) ... Spanish silver screen he... throb Antonio Bande... will make his debut a... director in April ... "Crazy in Alabama"... ring his wife and actr... Melanie Griffith. D... Variety said A ... adaptation of M... Childress' novel by ... same title. "Craz... Alabama" is about ... orphaned teenager li... with his aunt in the ... ern state of Alabama dur... the racially tense 19... With a $15 million budg... the movie is produced ... TriStar, for wh... Banderas and British ac... Anthony Hopkins stars ... in "The Mask of Zorro".

Streisand's fiance reportedly hits photographer

NEW YORK (AFP) – ... Singer Barbara Streisa... fiance, actor James Brol... punched out a Daily Ne... photographer who to... pictures of the couple ... ing out of a movie theat... the daily reported Frid... Richard Corkery, 33, s... fered injuries to his ... and neck and intends to ... suit. the newspaper sa... Corkery had a similar de... cation with comedian B... Cosby in 1992 but on t... instance it was the tele... sion star who filed suit ... won.

Male surgeons operate in nurses' gowns

CAPE TOWN (AFP) – ... Male surgeons at Gro... Schuur, Cape Town's se... ond biggest hospital, ... complaining that they ha... to operate in nurses' gow... because budget cuts ha... meant there is no money ... buy male outfits. "We fe... it degrading and insultin... It is also very difficult ... operate in a size 36 dre... one of the staff told ... Cape Argus newspap... which pictured a doctor ... a narrow, knee-length ... dress. Hospitals aroun... South Africa are struggling ... under budget restraint ... which have been imposed ... in order to spread healt... resources to parts of t... country that were deprive... under its previous ... apartheid government.

Candidate loses watch while shaking hands with voters

MANILA (AFP) – A ... presidential candidate ... coming Philippine ele... tions was rudely surprise... while shaking hands wit... crowd when one of the su... posed well-wishers mas... off with his watch, loc... newspapers report... Saturday. Senator Edgard ... Angara, the opposition ... vice-presidential candidate ... in the May 11 election ... was pressing the flesh dur... ing a campaign some in the ... southern city of Iligan ... Wednesday when the inci... dent occurred. Angara w... shaking hands of potentia... voters when someone ... the crowd pulled his watch ... off his outstretched hand ... the newspapers said.

Israeli planes attack Hizbollah

NABATIYEH (R) — Israeli warplanes launched 11 raids on suspected Hizbollah guerrilla bases in south Lebanon on Sunday, security sources said. They said the jets fired at least 23 rockets in the sorties. There was no word on casualties and Hizbollah in Beirut gave no comment on the attacks. Israeli warplanes started the raids by firing two rockets at targets in the Hizbollah stronghold of Lowaizeh, east of the south-ern port of Sidon. Later, two Israeli warplanes fired two rockets on the hills of Iqlim Al Toufah, a strategic Hizbollah area 40 km south of the capital, Beirut. In the third and fourth raids, two Israeli warplanes each time fired a total of four rockets on the same area. Two warplanes flying over the hills fired one rocket in the fifth attack, while four rockets were fired by two war-planes in the sixth.

Jordan Times

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جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الرأي»

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Jordan welcomes Cook statement on sanctions

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan on Sunday welcomed a statement made by British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook in which he said that the U.N. sanctions against Iraq could be lifted "in the fairly near future" if Iraqi President Saddam Hussein agreed to abide by any agreement on ending the current crisis. Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani said: "We welcome this stand and con-sider it a step in the right direction... this means that the continu-ous and relentless efforts which have been made by His Majesty King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan have eventually produced positive results," Dr. Anani said. He said that Jordan would like to praise the efforts of Iraq and Mr. Annan for the positive approach to the crisis, their intent to avert a damaging war that would devastate the whole region. Mr. Cook on Sunday told BBC Radio that "sanctions most certainly could be lifted if President Saddam carried out the agreement."

Annan brokers deal with Iraq

Albright says Washington would pursue own interests if unhappy with accord

Agreement to be signed today

BAGHDAD (R) — U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan ended talks with Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz on Sunday with an agreement on Iraq's dis-pute with the United Nations on weapons inspec-tions, an Iraqi source said.

The source, who asked not to be named, said the agreement would be signed at the foreign ministry on Monday morning. As he spoke, ministry employees were preparing a large room for the ceremony.

Mr. Annan left the min-istry with his aides, who looked smiling and relaxed, but U.N. officials could not immediately be reached for comment.

"He [Annan] feels that what they came up with is within the parameters that he was given before he left New York," Mr. Annan's spokesman Fred Eckhard said while the talks were in progress.

"He consulted with all five permanent members of the [Security] Council," he said. "He didn't read the text out to them. He con-sulted with them."

A diplomat briefed on the talks said earlier that only a few details remained to be sorted out.

"All the major issues have been resolved," he said. "A deal was reached with the president [Saddam Hus-sein]. They are just here to clean up the details," he said of Mr. Annan's evening talks with Mr. Aziz, which began at about 8.10 p.m. local time.

Asked if an agreement would be reached, Mr. Annan said as he arrived for the talks: "That's what I am going to find out. We are very close but we will know more after this meeting."

Mr. Annan earlier held three hours of talks with the Iraqi president at the Republican Palace. State television showed President Saddam in a dark suit greet-ing Mr. Annan and his aides.

The Iraqi News Agency (INA) quoted an authorised source as saying their meet-ing had been "positive" but gave no details.

"He [Annan] feels he is on the verge of a break-through," Mr. Eckhard told reporters afterwards.

He said Mr. Annan's evening talks with Mr. Aziz would aim at reaching agreement on a U.N.-draft-ed document that the U.N. chief would then present to the Security Council.

The diplomat who said all the major points had been resolved added that the main sticking point — Iraq's insistence on a time limit to any U.N. searches of eight "presidential sites" for prohibited weapons — had been settled.

"All the signs point to a relatively quick and easy finishing of the details tonight," he said.

Iraq has previously said it supports a Russian proposal under which U.N. weapons teams could inspect the presidential sites over a 60-day period, provided they are accompanied by diplo-mats representing Security Council members.

The United States and Britain have threatened to use force to compel Iraq to allow unfettered inspec-tions of the sites by the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM), charged with dismantling Baghdad's pro-hibited weapons, without any time limits.

In Washington, a White House spokesman said the United States was awaiting details of the reported set-tlement.

"Obviously we'll need to wait and see the details before making any formal comment," spokesman Joe Lockhart said. "Any deal that meets our criteria of allowing full unfettered access and maintaining the integrity of UNSCOM would be welcome."

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Washington would pursue

(Continued on page 7)



President Saddam Hussein and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan upon their meeting on Sunday (AP photo)

King: Situation calm in Ma'an

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein on Sunday said the situation in the southern town of Ma'an was calm fol-lowing two days of pro-Iraq riots that led to army deploy-ment in the town.

The "necessary measures were taken and the armed forces have entered the city. Together with public security (police) they control the situation and no accident has taken place," Jor-dan News Agency, Petra, quot-ed the King as saying after he visited the Prime Ministry yes-terday.

"Search is underway for weapons and for those elements that were responsible for (the riots) and who distorted the image of Ma'an... harming all of us in this country," the King added.

King Hussein made the state-ment hours after the army was deployed in Ma'an, following two days of riots and the death of Mohammad Abdullah Al Kateb on Friday.

According to government fig-ures 20 people were injured during the unrest.

The government blamed the riots on the head of Jordan Engineers Association, Leith Shbeilat, who was formally charged with instigating riots and lesé majesté (see separate story).

On Saturday, the King visited Ma'an and met with senior army officials as well as the town's senators and deputies and urged them to help in bring-ing life back to normal in this town.

"Either there is a country, there is security and there is order or there is not...," the King said on Sunday after a meeting with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali. "We will not allow any party to challenge law, order and security."

He said that the government was open for dialogue with political parties.

"It is time to live up to our responsibility. The door of dia-logue is always open and we wish to have such a dialogue," the King added.

Asked whether he thought foreign parties were involved in instigating the riots, the King said: "In my point of view, there are parties whose sole objective is to bury democracy in the name of democracy and this is not acceptable."

Army imposes curfew, starts sweep of Ma'an

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

MA'AN — The army on Sunday imposed a curfew on this town and started a house-to-house search for illegal arms following two days of pro-Iraq riots.

Minister of Interior Natheer Rasheed told Jor-dan Radio yesterday that the army was sent to Ma'an to look for illegal weapons.

"The armed forces have started search for illegal heavy weapons such as 0.5" (Russian made) Kalashnikov machine-guns," Mr. Rasheed said.

The minister emphasised that the army faced no resistance when it entered the city.

Security sources said that 50 army search units were combing the city for weapons.

The curfew imposed on Ma'an, 220 kilometres south of Amman, followed two days of riots and clash-es with police that resulted in the death of one man and the injury of more than 20.

While the government blames the killing of Mohammad Abdullah Al Kateb on "armed" demon-strators, the residents of Ma'an charge that police was responsible.

"The army entered Ma'an after midnight, closed all entrances to the city and prevented people from leaving their houses," said one resident who asked not to be named.

"The army knows how to deal with people," said one resident.

"There is great respect for the armed forces

(Continued on page 7)

Majali puts blame on Shbeilat for Ma'an riots

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Min-ister Abdul Salam Majali on Sunday described the Ma'an riots as sedition and put the responsibility on the president of the Engineers Association, Leith Shbeilat, for "instigating people to protest against the government which he (Shbeilat) described as Zionist and hostile to Iraq."

In an interview with the Mid-dle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC), Dr. Majali said that Mr. Shbeilat will be referred to court since an innocent person was killed in the Ma'an riots.

Asked whether his govern-ment will declare a state of emer-gency, he said that depended on how the situation develops. Dr. Majali said: "If the stability of the country is threatened, the government will not stand idle without resorting to all necessary measures."

Dr. Majali charged that there are certain parties that are trying to sow the seeds of dissension within the ranks of the Jordanian people in order to harm the country and destabilise the coun-try.

Dr. Majali, who did not reveal the identities of these parties, said: "Full details will be unveiled in time."

Dr. Majali denied that Iraq was behind the Ma'an protests. "Iraq is not behind these incidents and we always have consultations with Iraqi officials."

Commenting on the Iraqi cri-sis, the prime minister said that any military action against Iraq might lead to its partition and the impact of any strike will not be restricted to Iraq alone but will rather affect the whole region. Asked about diplomatic efforts to defuse the crisis, Dr. Majali said: "His Majesty King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan stressed the need for a peaceful solution to the cri-sis and we always call for medi-ation to defuse the crisis. Prince Hassan met with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and dis-cussed with him ways of defus-ing the crisis to spare Iraq any military strike and to reach a compromise acceptable to both Iraqis and the U.N. as well as the U.S."

On the possible use of Jordan airspace to attack Iraq, Dr. Majali said: "Although we do not have the capabilities to stop the use of our airspace and lands or to inter-cept missiles as was the case when Israel bombarded the Iraqi nuclear plant, we refuse any use of our airspace or our territories."

Shbeilat charged with inciting riots, slander

By Rana Husseini
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The state prosecutor has formally charged opposition leader Leith Shbeilat with inciting riots and slandering His Majesty King Hussein, official sources said on Sunday.

Mr. Shbeilat, also presi-dent of the Jordan Engi-neers Association, was arrested early Friday morn-ing after returning from Ma'an. Hours later, pro-Iraqi unrest erupted in the city leaving one Jordanian

(Continued on page 7)

Deputy demands dismissal of Rasheed

By Fariouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Ahmad Al Khattab, Lower House of Par-liament deputy from Ma'an, on Sunday blamed Minister of Interior Natheer Rasheed for the death of one demonstrator during Friday's riots in Ma'an and called for his dismissal, before the House went into a closed session to discuss the unrest.

The session came only hours after the army moved into Ma'an, placed it under a curfew and started to collect illegal arms.

The government blamed the president the of the Jordan Engineers Association, Leith Shbailat, who was arrested on Thursday while returning from Ma'an after delivering a sermon, for instigating the riots.

Before the start of the ses-sion, 13 deputies signed a peti-tion calling for a House ses-sion to look into the impeach-ment of the minister of interior for his handling of the protests.

"We call on His Majesty to dismiss the minister of interior because he and the director of public security are responsible for shedding the blood of our son," Ma'an deputy Ahamd Al Khattab, one of the lawmakers who signed the petition, told reporters on Sunday.

He claimed that Moham-mad Al Kateb, the 22 year-old Mu'ta University student who died during the unrest, was shot by police and not by armed demonstrators as the government said.

In a statement issued after the session, the House asked the government to form a committee of experts to fully investigate the unrest and determine who was behind it.

The statement said that Jor-danians have "the right to express their stands and opin-ions regarding U.S. threats to Iraq in a way that respects the Constitution and the law, pre-serves freedom of expression and maintains stability and peace."

"The House asks the gov-ernment and all popular organ-isations to strengthen national dialogue between them in a way that guarantees national cohesion in these critical times that are threatening Jordan and the entire region," the state-ment said.

Israeli officials' visits postponed

AMMAN (J.T.) — A spate of visits by Israeli officials to the Kingdom scheduled for this week have been indefinitely postponed due to regional and domestic tensions caused by the Iraq-U.S. standoff, officials said on Sunday.

The visit of Israeli minister of infrastructure, Ariel Sharon, to Amman yesterday was post-poned because of "prevailing regional circumstances," the minister of water and irriga-tion, Munther Haddadin, said according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Talks scheduled in Amman today between Minister of Industry and Trade Hani Mulki, with his Israeli counter-part, Natan Sharansky, and the visit by Israeli minister of internal security, Avigdor Kahalani, to the Kingdom on Wednesday, have also been deferred for the time being.

According to Mr. Haddadin, Mr. Sharon's visit was post-poned "due to Jordanian offi-cials' engagement with current regional developments, and the two countries' desire to give the water talks the time and attention they deserve."

Some officials had said on Saturday that pro-Iraqi riots in Ma'an and tension in the region due to the Iraq-U.S. standoff might lead to the can-cellation of Mr. Sharon's visit.

The scheduled meeting between Mr. Haddadin and Mr. Sharon was aiming to fol-low-up on talks held between the two officials in Israel on Wednesday.

Mr. Haddadin said that last week's discussions "resulted in removing a number of obstacles impeding the imple-mentation of some water pro-jects agreed upon in appendix two of the peace treaty between the two countries."

Yesterday's talks were also supposed to put the final touches on several projects allowing Jordan an increase in the utilisation of its share in bilateral water resources, and to provide extra amounts of drinking and irrigation water, said the minister.

He added that Israel dropped its objection to the building of the Red Sea-Dead Sea canal during the talks.

Man kills wife, children before suicide

By Rana Husseini
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A 30-year-old man Sunday shot and killed his wife and his two children before killing himself in his house in Jabal Zuhour, police sources said.

The man, Maher Moham-mad, reportedly entered his house located on Dar Khutbeh Street, shot his two children, Ihab, five, and Mai, three, his wife, Ghadah, 22, then shot himself, according to police officials who were present at the scene of crime.

"We are still questioning rel-atives and witnesses to deter-mine the motive behind the incident," a police official told the Jordan Times Sunday evening.

But according to witnesses and close neighbours of the family, Mr. Mohammad had frequent quarrels with his fam-ily.

"Mr. Mohammad had quar-relled with his brothers and wife about wanting to move out of the neighbourhood. In the past three days, the prob-lems escalated and today he came to his house and shot and killed his family and himself," one neighbour, who asked not to be identified, said.

The witness described Mr. Mohammad, a construction worker who had resided in the neighbourhood for the past 18 years, as a "decent and hard-working person."

Criminal Prosecutor Bassem Momani, who is handling the case, will start questioning rel-atives today, according to the official sources.

In a similar incident in August 1997, a 35-year-old man from Marka shot and killed his two children, injured his wife, then killed himself in what authorities said then was a battle between the husband and wife over child custody rights.

Jordan walks a tightrope in preparing for Gulf crisis scenarios

By Rana Sabbagh
Jordan Times Chief Reporter

AMMAN — As Arab anger appears to be grow-ing in tandem with U.S. preparations for an attack on Iraq, Jordan is walking a political tightrope while enforcing controversial cri-sis management policies at home.

His Majesty King Hus-sein has thrown his full weight behind the govern-ment — engaged in a tug-of-war with the vocal Islamist-led opposition over its two-week ban on pro-Iraqi rallies and its position on the crisis in the Gulf.

NEWS ANALYSIS

"Either there is a country, there is security and there is order or there is not...," the King said on Sunday after a meeting with Prime Minis-ter Abdul Salam Majali. "We will not allow any party to challenge law, order and security."

The King was speaking hours after the army and police launched a house-to-house search for illegal weapons in the curfew-bound southern town of Ma'an following two days of pro-Iraqi riots that left a Jordanian dead and more than twenty injured.

The unrest in Ma'an, scene of 1989 riots over price rises that helped speed up Jordan's return to democracy, came days after police used dogs, tear gas and rubber bullets to foil attempts to stage protests in Amman and Irbid.

(Continued on page 7)

Israeli army says risk of Iraqi missile attack remains low

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Israeli army said Sunday that the risk of an Iraqi missile attack remains low even if the United States launches a strike against Iraq in the dispute over U.N. weapons inspections.

"We continue to believe that the possibility that Israel is involved in the crisis is weak," army spokesman General Oded Ben Ami said.

"There is no reason that an American operation against Iraq will bring Israel into the conflict," he said. "But despite that, we are continuing civil defence preparations."

Israeli authorities are considering distributing antibiotics for use in case of a bacteriological attack, according to Israeli radio.

But Health Minister Yeshouha Matza said no decision had been made, and that he was personally opposed to such a move as "premature."

Since the start of the weapons crisis, Israel's military and political leaders have said the chances of a chemical or biological attack are minimal, but urged the population to prepare for the worst.

Gen. Ben Ami also said the United States has not yet supplied Israel with new batteries of the U.S.-made Patriot anti-missile missiles.

"The United States is committed to delivering the equipment when we need it," he said, without providing further details.

During the 1991 Gulf war, Iraq fired 39 Scuds on Tel Aviv, killing two people and injuring hundreds of others, but none of the Patriots used at the time succeeded in destroying a Scud in mid-air.

According to Israeli newspaper Haaretz, a new more efficient version of the Patriot was tested by the United States last year but will not be operational until 1999.

Israel starts extradition hearings against U.S. teen murder suspect

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An extradition hearing against a Jewish American teenager wanted in the United States for a brutal murder began Sunday but no immediate ruling is expected, court officials said.

Samuel Sheinbein, 17, who has been in Israeli custody for five months since fleeing the United States, was brought to the closed court session dressed in jeans and training shoes with chains around his ankles.

"This is the first day of debate and we will undoubtedly need two weeks before any decision is reached," said prosecutor Irit Kahn.

Sheinbein was arrested by Israeli police in September after fleeing the United States, where he is accused of murdering, burning and dismembering a young Hispanic man, Alfredo Enrique Tello, in Maryland.

The United States sent a formal extradition request in November shortly after Israeli Attorney General Eliakim Rubinstein ruled that the youth could not claim Israeli citizenship.

Israeli nationals cannot be extradited.

"It will probably take several hearings before a decision on his extradition is reached," Judge Moshe Ravid told AFP.

Sheinbein's parents attended the hearing, along with his grandmother who lives in Israel, and Maryland state prosecutor Robert Dean.

"We are only observers here. We support the efforts of the Israeli government for extradition," Mr. Dean said, adding that he was optimistic about the outcome.

The hearing was closed to the public and media because Sheinbein is a minor. He will be 18 in July.

The attorney general had ruled that Sheinbein's claim for citizenship was unfounded because his father left Israel as a child before the adoption of a 1952 citizenship law and subsequently tried to obtain both U.S. and Canadian nationality.

Under the 1952 law, anyone born of Israeli parents automatically becomes an Israeli citizen.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright had intervened to press for Sheinbein's extradition and the U.S. Congress threatened to withhold financial aid to pressure the Israeli government on the issue.

Israel's initial reluctance to extradite Sheinbein sparked street protests in the United States, notably among the Hispanic community, and raised concerns that a refusal to hand the suspect over could fuel anti-semitic feeling.

PNA frees journalists after overnight detention

BETHLEHEM (AFP) — Palestinian police freed on Sunday seven journalists working for a local television station near Bethlehem who were arrested the previous day accused of inciting pro-Iraqi support.

The entire editorial staff of the Bergers television station was held for 12 hours but no charges were pressed, according to one of the journalists.

"They told us we had incited [pro-Iraqi] demonstrations," said Hamdi Farraj, who also works for Agence France-Presse. "It's just a sign of the Authority's nervousness," Mr. Farraj said.

Bergers was one of eight Palestinian television stations closed down by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) this week in measures aimed at cutting pro-Iraqi broadcasting in the self-rule territories.

Thousands of Palestinians demonstrated their support for Iraq in its showdown with U.N. weapons inspectors in a series of protests in the West Bank on Saturday, despite a PNA ban on such events.



Some 10,000 Egyptian students at the Ain Shams University campus in Cairo protest Sunday against U.S. threats of a military strike against Iraq (AFP photo)

10,000 Egyptian students hold anti-U.S. protest

CAIRO (AFP) — Around 10,000 students burned U.S. and Israeli flags at the Ain Shams University campus here Sunday to protest against U.S. threats of a military strike against Iraq.

The students stamped their feet on the ground and waved copies of the Koran, Islam's holiest book, as they shouted anti-U.S. and anti-Israeli slogans, witnesses said.

"It is not out of love for Saddam but in solidarity with the children of Iraq," shouted the students.

They were referring to Iraqi children suffering from malnourishment and other ailments as a result of the economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations on Baghdad after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

One of the demonstrators carried a U.S. flag drawn in the shape of a shoe.

"Don't worry Iraq, we will protect you with our blood and our soul," the demonstrators chanted as they marched inside the campus.

"A thousand woes to the Jews. Baghdad will never die," they said.

The demonstrators also denounced the Israeli ambassador in Egypt, Zvi Mazel, branding him a "pig" and ordering him out of the "Land of the Nile."

The demonstration, authorised by the university's administration, was the largest of its kind in Egypt since the crisis between Iraq and the United Nations over arms inspections broke out more than one month ago.

Demonstrations are normally banned in Egypt under the state of emergency in force since the assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1981.

But the Egyptian authorities, who have appealed for a peaceful settlement to the Iraq crisis, have authorised a string of pro-Iraq protests over the past week and allowed the foreign press to cover them.

On Saturday, more than 150 Egyptian journalists burned the U.S. and Israeli flags during a sit-in in their union office in Cairo and 3,000 Egyptians protested U.S. policies towards Iraq after Friday prayers on Feb. 13.

Syrian president meets visiting Russian ministers

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syrian President Hafez Assad met Russian Justice Minister Sergei Stepashin and Atomic Energy Minister Viktor Mikhailov here Sunday, the president's spokesman said.

Russia's ambassador to Syria, Viktor Goguitidze, also attended the talks, spokesman Gebran Kourie said.

Earlier, Mr. Stepashin and Mr. Mikhailov met separately with Syrian Prime Minister Mahmoud Al Zobi and Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Salim Yassin.

The talks concerned ways "to promote economic and trade ties" between Damascus and Moscow, the official SANA news agency said.

Syrian Economy Minister Mohammad Imadi and Mr. Stepashin began the first session here Saturday of a Syrian-Russian economic and technical cooperation committee founded in 1993.

Syria and Russia will sign economic and nuclear-power accords Monday at the end of the meeting, a Russian diplomat said.

The agreements concern avoidance of double taxation, investments and cooperation on nuclear energy for peaceful means, the diplomat said without giving further details.

Discussions in the committee set up in 1993, will also concern Syria's debt to Russia of about $10 billion resulting mainly from Damascus's arms purchases from the former Soviet Union.

Iran says Pakistan 'not serious' in fighting terrorism

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran has accused Pakistan of lacking resolve in tracking down extremists responsible for a string of terrorist attacks against Iranian nationals and warned that ties could be affected, Iran's official news agency IRNA said Sunday.

The Pakistani ambassador here, Javid Hussein, was summoned to the foreign ministry Saturday, hours after two Iranian construction engineers were shot dead by unknown assailants in the Pakistani port city of Karachi.

Deputy Foreign Minister Mohsen Aminzadeh "protested that Pakistani officials are not serious in pursuing and punishing culprits for such incidents and demanded an explanation," IRNA said.

"We are concerned that Pakistan has been turned into an unsafe place for Iranian nationals and urge Pakistani officials to seriously review the means by which they confront the culprits," he said.

"The enemies have made relations between the two countries a target of their ominous plots and if Pakistani officials do not review their methods, relations will be seriously affected," Mr. Aminzadeh warned.

Three people attacked the engineers at their work site and fled on two motorbikes, police and witnesses said. The Iranians were identified as Ali Mohammad Habib Zadeh, 36, and Murtaza Adib Zadeh, 48.

The two were supervising the construction of a flyover by an Iranian company in the seaside Clifton area. They had arrived about eight months ago to work on the $7 million project being built by Machine Sazi Arak Iran.

Their bodies arrived early Sunday in Tehran and several officials, the victims' families and colleagues and the Pakistani ambassador attended a ceremony for the slain men.

MP Mahmoud Astaneh told Mr. Javid that he regretted that Pakistani officials "are taking no serious action to deal with the terrorists."

"The criminals are now convinced that the Pakistani government is weak and unable to confront them. So they feel safe," he said, quoted by IRNA.

The MP urged Pakistani judicial officials to speed up proceedings and issue verdicts against suspects in previous terrorist attacks against Iranian nationals in Pakistan.

The Pakistani ambassador was also called to a meeting Saturday with Iranian Parliamentary Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, who blamed "foreign hands" for the killings.

"Many people do not want us to have friendly relations and are seeking to cause problems," he said. "We are sure foreign hands are involved in such incidents."

The speaker also urged Islamabad to take "seriously this sensitive and important matter."

"Our people are waiting to learn about the results of your actions," he added.

The attack was the latest in a series against Iranian nationals in the past few years.

Five Iranian air force personnel were gunned down in September in the Pakistani city of Rawalpindi. An underground Sunni group claimed responsibility for the attack.

Israeli Arab risks Palestinian wrath to stand for Jerusalem council

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — A 47-year-old insurance agent is risking Palestinian wrath by planning to stand for election in Jerusalem, the first Arab to do so since Israel occupied the city's eastern Arab sector three decades ago.

Mussa Elayan, an Arab with Israeli citizenship, is organising an independent list of candidates to run for office in Jerusalem's municipal elections in November.

"Our aim is to defend the rights of Arabs who live in west Jerusalem. But that does not mean that if I am elected I will not be concerned with the affairs of our brothers in east Jerusalem," he told AFP.

Palestinians from Jerusalem have systematically boycotted municipal elections since 1967 to protest at Israel's occupation and illegal annexation of Arab east Jerusalem in the Arab Israeli war.

Asked about his decision to stand in defiance of the official Palestinian position, Mr. Elayan said: "I'm a Palestinian, I hold Israeli citizenship, and we have the right to stand for the Knesset [parliament]."

"But it's not a recognition of the Israeli position that considers Jerusalem is unified and the eternal capital of Israel," he said.

Mr. Elayan lives in Beit Safafa, an Arab district of about 8,000 people which was divided between Israel and Jordan before 1967.

Around 14,000 Arabs now live in west Jerusalem among 250,000 Jews, compared with around 160,000 Arabs in the eastern sector.

"We are standing for election because of the poor situation that Palestinians live in," he said, complaining of discrimination by the Jerusalem council against Arabs. "They've confiscated our land and refuse permission to build."

Mr. Elayan, currently head of the neighbourhood council in Beit Safafa, is not a member of any political party, and said he will stand as an independent.

He is lobbying Arabs in west Jerusalem who have Israeli citizenship and so far 15 people have agreed to join his election slate.

But a Palestinian official from Arab east Jerusalem accused Mr. Elayan of being manipulated by Jerusalem's right-wing mayor, Ehud Olmert, a close associate of Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu.

"There are Israeli hands behind his decision. We have known for a long time that Mr. Olmert was attempting to convince Arab figures to take part in the elections," the official said.

"Olmert and Netanyahu want to be able to exploit the final status negotiations and claim that the municipal council represents Arabs as well as Jews living in the city," he said.

Under the 1993 Oslo peace accords, Israel and the Palestinians are to discuss the fate of Jerusalem in so-called final status talks, but the Jewish state insists the entire city will remain Israel's eternal capital and that the issue is non-negotiable.

The Palestinians for their part hope to make Arab east Jerusalem the capital of their own future state.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

16:10 The World of Teddy Ruxpin and Friends
16:30 ..French Cartoon — Canon
17:00 Tallassa
18:00 Riding High
18:30 Drama — Neighbours
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Educational Programme
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Hope and Gloria
20:00 Documentary — Perspective
20:30 American Chart Show
21:10 Drama — The Burned Bridge
22:00 News in English
22:30 Law and Order
23:10 Bay Watch Nights
23:59 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:49.....Fajr
06:07(Sunrise) Duha
11:49.....Dhuhr
15:01.....'Asr
17:31.....Maghreb
18:49.....'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 810740

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 624853/624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 654932

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Sunny and warm weather conditions will prevail becoming partly cloudy in the evening, and winds easterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman.....04/17
Aqaba.....10/24
Deserts.....03/19
Jordan Valley.....08/23

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 17, Aqaba 23 Humidity readings: Amman 30 per cent, Aqaba 35 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mazen Nbali 830435
Dr. Fayez Dabbas 759155
Dr. Adnan Zaghloul 898140
Dr. Fakher Bilbeisi 5522233
Firas pharmacy 5661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281484
Al Quds pharmacy(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Zuhour Al Qadi 906606
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre.....637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency.....199
Rescue Police.....192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade.....617101
Blood Bank.....775121
Highway Police.....843402
Traffic Police.....896390
Public Security Dept..... 630321
Hotel Complaints.....5605800
Price Complaints..... 5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints ...897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs.....5661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Co.....636381
RJ Flight Information ..44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Luzmila 630195
Hussein Medical Centre 81381/32
Khalidi Maternity..... 644281/6
Akileh Maternity.....642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity ...642362
Malhas, J. Amman. 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital ..5667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali ...5666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir.....775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital .5602240/50
Amal Hospital 5674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital..... (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital(09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital(02)247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (+4153200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:25 Sanaa (RJ)
08:25 Damascus (RJ)
08:35 Jeddah (RJ)
09:15 New Delhi (RJ)
09:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
16:20 Cairo (RJ)
16:25 London (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:05 Kuwait (RJ)
18:35 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
19:00 Bangkok (RJ)
02:50 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

Other Flights
04:15 London (BA)
09:15 Cairo (MS)
12:00 Khartoum (SD)
13:25 Bahrain (GF)
14:30 Doha (QR)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
16:00 Dubai (EK)
18:00 Istanbul (SD)
20:00 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:10 Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:30 Athens (OA)
01:25 Amsterdam (KL)

Royal Wings (RW)
06:05 Tel Aviv (RW)
07:25 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
07:15 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
09:50 Aqaba (RW)
11:10 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
12:00 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
21:20 Aqaba (RW)
22:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20 Beirut (RJ)
10:10 Frankfurt, London (RJ)
11:00 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
12:05 Kuwait (RJ)
12:30 Cairo (RJ)
20:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:40 Damascus (RJ)
20:45 Abu Dhabi (RJ)
21:15 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
22:45 Sanaa (RJ)

Other Flights
06:00 Istanbul (TK)
08:25 London (BA)
10:30 Al 'Arish (PF)
10:30 Cairo (MS)
13:20 Istanbul (SD)
14:15 Bahrain (GF)
15:50 Doha (QR)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
17:00 Damascus, Dubai (EK)
19:00 Khartoum (SD)
21:20 Tel Aviv (LY)
23:53 Damascus, Paris (AF)
02:25 Amsterdam (KL)
03:00 Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)
05:30 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
06:50 Tel Aviv (RW)
07:55 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
08:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
10:20 Aqaba (RW)
11:40 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
20:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50 Aqaba (RW)



...test Sunday against U.S. three

...i-U.S. protest

...lso ...as- ...zel, ...and ...and ...ho- ...y's ...the ...ypt ...raq ...ver ...out ...or- ...der ...in ...ion

of President Anwar Sada... 1981.

But the Egyptian authorities, who have appealed for peaceful settlement to the Iraq crisis, have authorised a string of pro-Iraq protests over the past week and allowed the foreign press to cover them.

On Saturday, more than ... Egyptian journalists burned the U.S. and Israeli flags during a sit-in in their union office in Cairo and the Egyptians protested U.S. policies towards Iraq after Friday prayers on Feb. 1...

...sian ministers

...es- ...an- ...m- ...ice ...gn ...er ...of ...le- ...rm ...on.

...investments and cooperation ...nuclear energy for pea... ...means, the diplomat said, ...out giving further detail.

Discussions in the commission set up in 1993, will also cover Syria's debt to Russia of ... $10 billion resulting mainly from Damascus' arms purchases from the former Soviet Union.

...salem council

...he ...st ...u- ...le ...on ...m ...ed ...g- ...ng ...n- ...ds ...e ...ir. ...n- ...rt ...d

...said.

"Olmert and Netanyahu want to be able to exploit the final status negotiations and claim that the municipal council represents Arabs as well as Jews living in the city," he said.

Under the 1993 Oslo peace accords, Israel and the Palestinians are to discuss the fate of Jerusalem in so-called final status talks, but the Jewish state insists the entire city will remain Israel's eternal capital and that the issue is non-negotiable.

The Palestinians for their part hope to make Arab East Jerusalem the capital of their own future state.

20:40	... Damascus (R
20:45	... Abu Dhabi (R
21:15	... Dubai, Muscat (R
22:45	... Sana'a (R

Other Flights

06:00	... Istanbul (Ta
08:25	... London (Ba
10:30	... Al Ain (R
10:30	... Cairo (M
13:20	... Istanbul (IA
14:15	... Bahrain (G
15:50	... Doha (Q
15:50	... Vienna (O
17:00	... Damascus, Dubai (D
19:00	... Khartoum (S
21:20	... Tel Aviv (U
23:53	... Damascus, Paris (AF
02:25	... Amsterdam (M
03:00	... Athens (O

Royal Wings (RW)

05:30	Amman (Marka Airport) (RW
06:50	... Tel Aviv (RW
07:55	... Amman (QAIA) (RW
08:50	Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
10:20	... Aqaba (RW
11:40	... Amman (QAIA) (RW
20:30	... Amman (QAIA) (RW
21:50	... Aqaba (RW



PRAYING FOR PEACE: Iraqi Christians who fled from Baghdad to Jordan after the 1991 Gulf war pray and light candles for peace Sunday in a church in Amman (Reuters photo)

Voices in the Wilderness team returns after delivering medical supplies to Iraq

By Rana Husseini
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — An organisation comprising U.S. and U.K. volunteers who announced they were challenging U.N. sanctions on Iraq by delivering over $110,000 worth of medicine and medical supplies to children's hospitals have returned to Amman from Baghdad.

"Our mission to Iraq was to publicly break the sanctions in order to help raise the profile of the issue and to bring attention to the impact of the sanctions on the Iraqi civilians," Voices in the Wilderness member Mil Rai, 32, said.

In addition, Mr. Rai continued, the group's aim was to express their opposition to the use of military force "by our British government and the U.S. government."

"We believe that an air strike against Iraq would be immoral because the burden of the strike will fall on civilians, illegal because there has been no authorisation for the use of force by the U.N., and counterproductive," he stated.

The members of the organisation, which completed its 11th trip to Iraq on Friday, risk 12 years in prison and $1 million in fines for carrying medicine to Iraq without authorisation, he said.

"Our basic message is that sanctions are a weapon of mass destruction [and this] needs to be illuminated for the sake of the Iraqi children," he maintained.

The U.N. sanctions, which have been in force since the 1991 Gulf war, can only be lifted when U.N. weapons inspectors have certified that all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction have been destroyed.

"The United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation estimated in December 1995 that 567,000 Iraqi children have died as a direct result of sanctions," according to Mr. Rai.

Three of the 12 volunteers, who during their 10-day stay visited Basra, Baghdad and Salouja, decided to stay in Iraq, according to Mr. Rai.

"Three of us decided to stay in Baghdad, either until a peaceful resolution of the inspection crisis, or if there is bombing they will risk their lives and stay to observe the effect of the bombing on the civilians," Mr. Rai told the Jordan Times.

He added that the group's main impression in the three cities they visited was that the most important thing for the Iraqi people was the lifting of sanctions.

"What people cannot stand there is that their children are dying because they cannot get medicine, the water they drink makes them sick, and there is not enough food," he said.

But he promised that the medical support trips will continue, "because we are determined to help the children of Iraq."

Srour meets with delegation representing taxi drivers union

AMMAN (Petra) — Lower House of Parliament Speaker Su'd Hayel Srour on Sunday said Parliament would take into consideration comments and ideas from the union of taxi drivers in working out a draft traffic law.

At a meeting with a delegation representing the union, Mr. Srour said the union's ideas will help Parliament reach a balanced law that accommodates the interests of all concerned parties and safeguards national interests.

The delegation presented their written views about the projected draft law and received a pledge from Mr. Srour that the House's law committee will duly study their suggestions.

The delegation voiced the union's appreciation of Mr. Srour's concern over issues of interest to the union and the owners of taxi cabs and his involvement of union members and union ideas in the process of formulating a balanced law.

Mr. Srour stated that it is Parliament's policy to take into consideration the views and ideas of unions when debating laws that concern their performance and their status.

Minister urges NGOs to develop coordination

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Social Development Mohammad Kheir Mamser on Sunday said his ministry will support projects or activities by foreign and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating in Jordan.

At a meeting attended by eight representatives of these organisations, Dr. Mamser said the ministry appreciates the NGOs' services to the local communities in the Kingdom.

However, he added that the ministry hopes that they will coordinate their activities among themselves and with the ministry to avoid redundant efforts and save effort and expense.

The minister urged the organisations to give priority in their activities to children, adding that the Ministry of Social Development is working to establish a special unit for child protection in conjunction with the Jordan River Development Project.

Dr. Mamser also urged these organisations to submit their fiscal budgets to the ministry at the start of each year detailing the projects they intend to carry out and the targeted sectors.

The minister expressed hope that the NGOs would change their traditional services and activities and begin giving priority to development and income-generating projects.

He said coordination with the ministry was necessary so that the government can follow the projects, help supervise their implementation, and provide the necessary support.

Dr. Mamser said the ministry has decided to organise a special exhibition displaying various NGO activities and programmes.

Prime minister warns media against false reports on internal security

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Sunday advised the Jordanian media to disregard rumours and ignore false reports on the internal security of the country.

Addressing a meeting for the directors of government-controlled media services, Dr. Majali said the government will not allow any party to infringe on the country's laws or disregard the proper channels, which he said alone can hold the government to account for its decisions and measures.

Warning that the Kingdom is exposed to what he termed numerous forces harbouring ill-intent, he said these forces are seeking to destabilise the country with the assistance of certain persons trying to achieve personal objectives.

The behaviour of these elements, Dr. Majali said, has opened the door for some non-Jordanian Arab and foreign parties to portray the situation in a very negative way.

"The present circumstances require all of us to rise to the level of responsibility and act with common sense rather than being carried away by sentiments, because the homeland's security, stability, self-respect and interests are above all other considerations," said the prime minister.

"All Jordanians should be keen on displaying their commitment and fulfilling their duties toward the Kingdom, which has made many sacrifices in confronting the challenges and dangers posed to it and to other Arab states," he added.

Dr. Majali noted that His Majesty King Hussein has been working since the beginning of the Iraqi crisis to ensure a peaceful resolution.

He said the King realises the magnitude of the losses that the Iraqi people and the whole region would suffer, as well as the negative effect on the peace process and the position of the Palestinians and their cause, in the event of a military strike.

Dr. Majali noted HRH Crown Prince Hassan's visits to Britain and France and his meetings with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan in the course of seeking to defuse the crisis.

In his remarks following the rioting in the southern city of Ma'an, the prime minister accused some trade unionists of trying to politicise the unions and lead them away from professional goals.

He said certain elements among these unions are trying to sow the seeds of dissension within the ranks of union members as a tool to exercise pressure on the government and the average citizen with the aim of ruining the country.

Dr. Majali warned that the government would not stand idle vis-à-vis such a situation and would resort to all necessary legal measures to deter such practices.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Information Abdullah Ensour on Sunday said carrying weapons in Jordan is generally banned by law and citizens are not allowed to move about in the streets and in demonstrations carrying arms.

In a statement to the London-based Middle East Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), Dr. Ensour said the law permits people to carry arms only if they have been licensed and that is why security forces are searching for unlicensed weapons in Ma'an.

"We have displayed the seized weapons on Jordan Television because we do not conceal the facts from our people," the minister added.

Dr. Ensour said the Jordanian judiciary is now handling the case, adding that civilian public prosecutors are accompanying the police in their search for arms in Ma'an.

Defence asks court to acquit man on trial for smuggling weapons to West Bank

By Rana Husseini
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The defence team of a 35-year-old man being tried for plotting acts of sabotage and smuggling weapons to the West Bank asked the court Sunday to find their client innocent.

Ismat Shukri, along with Ali A. and Mohammad M., both being tried in absentia, are charged with manufacturing explosives in 1995 with the intent of using them against tourists and with smuggling weapons to the West Bank from 1995 to 1997 via the Dead Sea.

In their 13-page closing argument, Mr. Shukri's defence team again contested the court's jurisdiction and the investigation procedures and claimed that their client confessed due to duress and psychological pressure exerted on him by the authorities.

Mr. Shukri had testified in court that he owned machine guns because he was a member of a radical Palestinian group until 1992, and that the hand grenade the authorities seized from his house was in fact "a piece of small metal box in the shape of grenade that I found in the street and gave to my children to play with as a toy."

According to the prosecution charge sheet, Mr. Shukri, who has known the second defendant for seven years, manufactured explosives in 1995 and hid them in his house.

In 1996, the two defendants met with the third, Mohammad M., and decided to export machine guns to the West Bank in rubber boats via the Dead Sea.

Mr. Shukri was arrested by security forces on Sept. 20, 1997, after the authorities received a tip that he possessed explosives and was smuggling weapons.

State Prosecutor Lieutenant Colonel Mahmoud Obeidat had asked the court recently to convict Mr. Shukri on all charges, defending the investigation procedures and stating that "the defendant confessed willingly to the charges."

In addition, Lt. Col. Obeidat said the prosecution had presented "strong and consistent evidence."

The military court, headed by Judge Yousef Faouri and including Judges Ahmad Ayash and Fawaz Boqour, set March 7 as the date either to issue a verdict or further review the case.

what's going on

FILMS

* Two films entitled "Braveheart" and "The Thief of Baghdad" at the British Council, Jabal Amman on Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. and Wednesday at 5:00 p.m., respectively.

* "L'ami de mon amie" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

CULTURAL WEEK

* Chinese Cultural Week at the Orthodox Club, Abdoun, until Feb. 23.

PLAY

* Children's play "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Tuesday, Feb. 24, at 5:30 p.m. and on Wednesday and Thursday, Feb. 25-26, at 10:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., respectively.

LECTURE

* "Angel in the House, or Man's Perdition" by Noha Hommad and Mrs. Anna Obeidat (Considering the two antithetical images of women in literature throughout the ages which are epitomised by the angel in the house and the she-devil).

EXHIBITIONS

* Exhibition of Finnish literature and textiles at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Feb. 27.

* Paintings by Sudanese artist Salah Al Murr at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Feb. 23.

* Private collection of Mamdouh Bisharat entitled "A Vision, An Identity" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until March 5 (Tel. 643251). Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists —"The New Collection."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Health minister, Omani ambassador discuss bilateral relations

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Health and Medical Care Ashraf Kurdi on Sunday received Omani Ambassador to Jordan Hamad Ben Hilal Al Moammari. The two discussed bilateral ties and cooperation in health and medical fields between the two countries.

99 accidents leave three dead

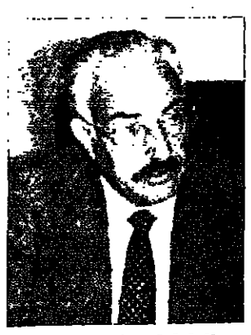
AMMAN (Petra) — Ninety-nine accidents took place in the Kingdom on Saturday, resulting in three deaths, according to the Civil Defence Department's daily report.

CORRECTION

IN THE article entitled "Queen inaugurates Cerebral Palsy Centre in Aqaba," which appeared in the Sunday (22/2/98) edition of the Jordan Times, it was reported that the Cerebral Palsy Foundation "provides... brain scans and MRIs." In fact, the foundation does not provide these services but refers cases to the army hospital, which does. The Jordan Times regrets any inconveniences caused by this error.

PSD plans new criminal investigation unit

By Rana Husseini
Jordan Times Staff Reporter



Nasouh Muhiddin

AMMAN — Jordan, seeking to curb a rising crime rate, is planning to open a state of the art building to house a criminal investigation department.

The Kingdom has been rocked in the past month by a series of grisly crimes alien to Jordanian society. The latest was the brutal attack on a seven-year-old child who had his male organs cut off by an unidentified assailant.

During the past two months, Jordan has witnessed several mysterious crimes, including the brutal murder of six Iraqis and two Egyptians in Al Rabia on Jan. 18.

Two weeks later, a pharmacist was killed and another was injured in two separate attacks in the same evening. Two days after that, a Sri Lankan woman was found shot dead on the stairs of an Abdali apartment building. Last week, police announced that they were holding a suspect who reportedly confessed to the two murders. They said theft was the motive.

"The rapid socio-economic changes, the increase in population and the easy access to all sorts of media, whereby people see all sorts of programmes, especially crimes, has produced these [previously] unknown murders," Public Security Department Director Lieutenant General Nasouh Muhiddin said.

Poverty and the disintegration of family bonds were among the primary causes for the increase in the crime rate, the police official added.

"The suspect in the killing of the pharmacist and the Sri Lankan woman came from a poor and disintegrated family," Lt. Gen. Muhiddin explained.

The police chief told the Jordan Times that despite the increase in crime, the trend has not reached an alarming level, and "Jordan still enjoys a stable environment and is free of organised crimes."

"We have solved most of the big and mysterious cases in the past two years," the police chief said. "For example, in 1997, there were 105 murders committed in Jordan, and only two of those are still unsolved."

"Jordan ranks among the top nations in solving crimes, with a 90 per cent rate," Lt. Gen. Muhiddin said.

The new criminal investigation department, he added, will not only be dedicated to solving murders, but will also used to train officers.

The new department will work closely with the Unsolved Murders Department, which was recently established, he said.

"We have not forgotten about the unsolved murders, and our investigation teams are constantly working on old cases and gathering evidence," the police official said.

"We have appointed specialised and trained investigation teams, and only competent persons are accepted for the job," Lt. Gen. Muhiddin added.

Furthermore, the police department has allocated all the resources to rehabilitate these officers by sending them to the latest training courses abroad.

Lt. Gen. Muhiddin added that the new department will also focus on combating drug trafficking and addiction in Jordan, "which has rapidly increased in the past few years."

In both 1996 and 1997, "the Anti-Narcotics Department seized drugs equivalent to the amount seized by the same department during its 23 years of service," he said.

After many years of denying that there was a drug problem, the authorities are now admitting that the Kingdom, long considered only as a transit point in the international drug trade, has become a drug consuming society.

Recent field studies by the Anti-Narcotics Department indicate that drug use has increased over the past few years and that more than 3,000 citizens now suffer from drug dependency.

In addition, Jordan's geographical location at the crossroads of drug trafficking between neighbouring consuming and producing countries has enhanced its role as a transit point.

Dozens leave northern branches of NCP in latest en masse resignation

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The progressive disintegration of the much-touted National Constitutional Party (NCP) has entered its fourth month, with dozens of resignations from the party's branches in northern Jordan.

Officials at NCP headquarters confirmed yesterday that 30 members from Deir Abi Sa'id, in the northern district of Kura, resigned over the weekend, in addition to some 20 members from the Irbid branch who resigned last week.

NCP spokesperson Hakam Kheir told the Jordan Times yesterday that the newest wave of defections was linked to the resignation of former NCP Deputy Secretary General Abdul Ra'ouf Rawabdeh, officially accepted by the party Saturday.

"It seems the resignees belonged to Mr. Rawabdeh's former party, Al Yaqthah [Reawakening], and left the NCP following his resignation," Dr. Kheir said.

Al Yaqthah was one of nine pro-government parties that merged into the NCP last May.

Mr. Rawabdeh, a former deputy prime minister, wrote in his resignation letter last week that he preferred to be independent and not bound by any party's directives, according to Dr. Kheir.

Mr. Rawabdeh declined to comment on the issue.

He was one of only two out of 11 candidates fielded by the NCP who won a seat in last November's parliamentary elections.

The other NCP deputy in the 80-member Lower House is the party's secretary general, Abdul Hadi Majali, a former minister and army chief of staff.

In the seven previous waves of resignations, resulting from personal rivalries that flared during last October's election campaign, resignees denounced Mr. Majali's leadership, describing it as "authoritarian, unilateral and undemocratic."

Former NCP President Akif Fayez, who has also served as an army chief and a Lower House speaker, was among the most prominent resignees.

Analysts have explained the storm of resignations by pointing to the tribal character of the party, particularly prone to spark individual jealousies.

Some have also said the party built up exaggerated expectations among its following, portraying itself as the regime's party, able to provide jobs and allocate offices in the establishment.

Speculation in the Arabic press has suggested that Mr. Fayez could form a new centrist party, to be named the Democratic Constitutional Party, but there has been no official confirmation.

Gunmen in Georgia release one U.N. observer

ZUGDIDI, Georgia (AFP) — Gunmen holding four U.N. observers captive in a remote village in western Georgia Sunday released one of their hostages, a Georgian deputy announced.

The hostage released was Uruguayan Captain Ronald Garcia, 40, said deputy Guya Jakeli, who had taken part in the negotiations.

Journalists saw Capt. Garcia leave the village of Jikhashkari, 18 kilometres from Zugdidi, where he and the three other U.N. observers — a Czech, a Swede and another Uruguayan — were being held.

Gunmen holding four U.N. observers in a remote village in western Georgia threatened "extreme measures" against their hostages Sunday, as a fourth day of negotiations failed to produce a breakthrough.

Gang leader Gotsha Esaybua told state television his men "could go as far as taking extreme measures" unless his group's demands were met, saying "we have nothing to lose."

He reinforced the message in a second interview with Russia's television station ORT, saying: "The fate of the hostages is in the hands of (Georgian President Eduard) Shevardnadze. We will go all the way if our demands are not met."

The gang first threatened to kill their 10 hostages — a Czech, a Swede, two Uruguayans and six Georgians — when the hostage drama erupted Thursday.

Saturday, the gunmen had reportedly offered to free one of the Uruguayans if surrounding Georgian forces were replaced by U.N. troops.

Some 2,000 troops, interior ministry and special forces are enforcing a security cordon thrown around the area.

Mr. Esaybua heads a group of 20 diehard supporters of late president Zviad Gamsakhurdia, ousted in a January 1992 coup, who have never recognised the legitimacy of his successor Mr. Shevardnadze.

The kidnappers have offered to release the hostages in return for a meeting between Mr. Shevardnadze and their movement's leadership; the release of jailed "Zviadists," including those linked to a Feb. 9 bid to kill Mr. Shevardnadze; and the closure of Russian military bases in Georgia.

Sunday's broadcast came as Security Minister Jemal Gakhokidze returned to the village of Jikhashkari, 18 kilometres from Zugdidi, for a fresh round of face-to-face negotiations with the kidnappers.

Deputy presidential spokesman Soso Tkebuchava earlier hinted the authorities were looking into the possibility of a meeting between Mr. Shevardnadze and the Zviadist leadership.

"The parties are examining the question of a meeting between President Shevardnadze and the Zviadists, not as representatives of the government in exile but as a simple opposition party," said Mr. Tkebuchava.

Mr. Esaybua wants former Gamsakhurdia ally Nemo Burchuladze, deputy speaker of Georgian Supreme Soviet in 1990-91, to represent them at the talks. No date or venue had been agreed.

Mr. Tkebuchava said the kidnappers knew the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia could not be organised overnight and ruled out the release of Zviadists linked to the Feb. 9 assassination attempt on Mr. Shevardnadze.

Interfax quoted Mr. Gakhokidze as saying that the talks would continue until the hostages were released, and ruled out launching a raid on the farmhouse which is surrounded by heavily armed troops backed by armoured vehicles.

Georgian deputy Khatuna Dahoperia, who is taking part in the negotiations along with Deputy Defence Committee Chairman Gia Jakeli, said: "We will do everything we can to resolve this question peacefully."

In Tbilisi, the speaker of the Georgian parliament Zorab Jvania, number two in Georgian hierarchy, said he was against concessions while the hostages remained in captivity.

"My personal position is that there can be no political talks with the terrorists, only talks on the release of the hostages," he said.

Mr. Shevardnadze talked on the phone with Czech President Vaclav Havel and his Uruguayan counterpart late Saturday to discuss the crisis. Tbilisi has come under international pressure to resolve the standoff through negotiations.



William Job Leavitt, Jr. speaks during a news conference held outside the Clark County Detention Centre in Las Vegas, Nevada (Reuters photo)

FBI releases one suspect in U.S. anthrax scare case

LAS VEGAS, Nevada (AFP) — The FBI released one of the two suspects detained under suspicion of carrying military-grade anthrax, once technicians determined that the confiscated substance was really a harmless anthrax veterinary vaccine.

Late Saturday here, the FBI released William Job Leavitt, 47, a scientist and former bishop in the Mormon church, on his own recognisance.

Mr. Leavitt and Larry Wayne Harris, 46, were arrested here Wednesday following a tip from an informant that the men were plotting some type of attack using biological weapons.

Both Mr. Harris, a member of a white supremacist group, and Mr. Leavitt were charged Thursday with planning to use anthrax as a deadly weapon.

Mr. Harris, who was on probation for previous crimes, will remain behind bars pending a detention hearing Monday.

In a statement, the FBI said that a test of the substances recovered from the men "showed the existence of traces of harmless anthrax used as a veterinary vaccine."

"The traces of anthrax lacked the DNA material that would cause the bacteria to form spores and as a result is not a toxic pathogen," according to the statement.

Mr. Leavitt's attorney Lamond Mill said his client ended up in trouble because the FBI tipster — a man he said was convicted twice for extortion — had tried to blackmail Mr. Leavitt into buying some laboratory equipment. Mr. Leavitt refused to make the purchase.

The informant also told authorities that Mr. Harris had boasted he had enough anthrax to "wipe out the city," according to a criminal complaint.

In its lethal form, anthrax is a bacterium that normally strikes livestock. Anthrax spores can enter the body through the stomach, lungs or even small skin lesions.

It brings on fever, respiratory failure and septic shock. It can kill within a week.

An experimental anthrax vaccine has not been fully tested in humans.

The FBI said it "acted in the interests of public safety" by arresting the men, because of comments they made about possessing anthrax.

Opposition claims another town as heavy fighting rages north of Kabul

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Afghan opposition troops said they captured a strategic town in a province northeast of Kabul Sunday after fierce fighting with the Taleban militia, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

The private news service quoted Abdullah, a spokesman for opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood, as saying they captured the town of Alishang in Laghman province Sunday morning.

Abdullah, who like many Afghans goes by one name, said the fall of Alishang threatened the provincial capital Mehtarlam. He said the opposition forces seized eight arms and ammunition depots and a large quantity of heavy weapons from the Taleban soldiers.

There was no independent confirmation of the report.

AIP said the fighting, which erupted two days ago, intensified Sunday and Taleban aircraft bombed the rival forces to try to prevent their advance. It said 32 Taleban and opposition soldiers had been killed so far and more than 50 injured.

The news service said the Taleban casualties were brought to the eastern city of Jalalabad while fresh Taleban fighters were moved Sunday to reinforce the fundamentalist militia in Laghman.

Mr. Masood's forces launched the attack in Laghman province late Friday. Saturday AIP, quoting opposition sources, said the district of Daulatshah fell to the attackers.

Opposition sources claim the local population is backing their forces. They said 150 Taleban soldiers were captured in the first assault late Friday.

AIP said Taleban sources in Jalalabad confirmed that a local commander allied to the Islamic militia switched sides after being bribed by the opposition, leading to clashes in the area.

The heavy fighting in Laghman was the first in several months in the region, considered the Taleban's stronghold.

The Islamic militia controls two-thirds of Afghanistan, including the capital Kabul. An opposition alliance headed by ousted president Burhanuddin Rabbani holds the north of the country.

IRA splinter group suspected of car-bomb blast

BELFAST (AFP) — Police suspect that a splinter group of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) was behind a car-bomb blast outside a Northern Ireland police station, sources close to the investigation said Sunday.

No one has yet claimed responsibility for Friday night's blast in the Protestant village of Moira, 30 kilometres west of Belfast, which slightly injured 11 people.

According to the sources, police have little hard evidence, but investigators speculate that the hardline Continuity Army Council (CAC) may be behind the bombing.

Sinn Fein leader Mitchel McLaughlin lent weight to this theory Sunday in a television interview in which he said "the speculation at the moment would appear to point towards the Continuity Army Council."

Britain's Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam stressed that hardline factions such as the CAC, which refuses to respect the IRA ceasefire, were bent on derailing the peace talks.

"One of the problems we have in Northern Ireland is the number of groups who are not committed to the ceasefire — who are in fact intent on destroying it," she said.

Although it only has a few dozen members, the CAC has a significant operational capacity and targeted Moira in a similar bombing in September 1997.

Northern Afghanistan escapes casualties from Friday quake

KABUL (AFP) — The second earthquake to hit northeastern Afghanistan this month caused little damage and no casualties but a full assessment has yet to be made, an official said Sunday.

A spokesman for the anti-Taleban alliance, based close to the region rattled Friday, said almost all local authorities close to the epicentre had been contacted and no reports of deaths or damage had been received.

"We have spoken to nearly all the authorities by radio in the area and they have all said no people have been killed," said Mohammad Arif in a satellite telephone interview.

Quake-prone northern Afghanistan was jolted by a powerful earthquake late Friday, 16 days after tremors devastated some two dozen villages in Takhar province held by the Afghan opposition. An estimated 4,500 people died in the first quake.

A French observatory in Strasbourg said the magnitude of the latest earthquake was 6.8 on the Richter scale.

Several northern cities in neighbouring Pakistan were also rocked. The seismological department there said the epicentre was in the Hindu Kush mountain range 250 kilometres north of the city of Peshawar bordering Afghanistan. The earthquake on Feb. 4 was measured at 5.6 on the scale but the destruction in Rostaq district near the epicentre was widespread.

Mr. Arif, speaking from the base of the ousted Kabul government in the Panjshir valley north of Kabul, said the quake on Friday was longer in duration and lower in ground intensity than the massive quake that struck the area more than two weeks ago.

He said tremors hit an area around 120 kilometres south of Rostaq.

"The earthquake was very strong in southern Badakhshan but because it was not a sudden shock-like in Rostaq people could get out of their houses in time," he explained.

"There are reports of cracks in houses and some injuries from falling things but thanks to God that is all," he said.

Aid workers based in Rostaq, busy coordinating relief efforts for the victims of the month's first earthquake, added that they also had received no reports of further casualties.

"So far there is no news of more casualties around here but because of the early timing of the quake we hope less people were in their homes," an official from the International Committee of the Red Cross said.

Villagers flee to border after fresh fighting erupts in western Cambodia

BANGKOK (AFP) — About 1,200 Cambodian villagers fled to the Thai border opposite Sa Kaew province after a heavy firefight between rival Cambodian armies broke out early Sunday morning, sources said.

Nong Jan village headman Som Chai told AFP that forces loyal to ousted First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh attacked government positions near Nong Jan, Thmar Puok district, about 3:30 a.m. (2030 Saturday GMT).

He said about 100 royalist troops armed with rocket propelled grenades, mortars and machine guns launched the surprise attack under the command of FUNCINPEC Major General Lay Virak.

Lay Virak's men withdrew after about two hours of fierce fighting, leaving one soldier dead and three others injured. Two civilians died and eleven more — mostly women — suffered injuries, Som Chai said.

Forces loyal to the rival Cambodian premiers have been fighting since Second Prime Minister Hun Sen ousted Prince Ranariddh from Phnom Penh during bloody streetfights in July last year.

FUNCINPEC troops have been defending their main stronghold at O'Smach on the northern border with Thailand since August, protected by hills and thick minefields.

Thai military officers said the latest attack would not delay plans to open the border checkpoint between the Sa Kaew provincial centre of Aranyaprathet and Poipet in Cambodia.

Colonel Daetsak Sirikul said the fighting was far enough away from the checkpoint to pose no danger to traders and travellers who would be allowed to cross from Wednesday as planned.

Third Bosnian Serb war crimes suspect to surrender

BELGRADE (R) — Bosnian Serb Simo Zaric, one of six men from Samac wanted for trial by the Hague war crimes tribunal, will surrender to the court Tuesday, his lawyer was quoted as saying Sunday.

Mr. Zaric will voluntarily turn himself in to the authorities of the Bosnian Serb Republic in Samac so that he can go to the Hague to prove his innocence, the Yugoslav News Agency Tanjug quoted Mr. Zaric's lawyer, Branislav Pisarevic, as saying.

Mr. Zaric was expected to turn himself in last weekend together with Miroslav Tadic, 60, and Milan Simic, 40, the first Bosnian Serb indicates to surrender voluntarily to U.S. diplomats and troops of the NATO Peacekeeping Forces (SFOR).

He delayed his surrender, citing technical and legal reasons.

"I will turn myself in to the tribunal as soon as I am ready and once a couple of legal matters clear up," Mr. Zaric was quoted as saying last week.

Mr. Zaric, Mr. Tadic, Mr. Simic and three more Bosnian Serbs from Samac were indicted for allegedly helping to set up detention camps and organise the ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Croats and Muslims when the Bosnian war broke out in 1992.

Mr. Tadic and Mr. Simic, who arrived at the tribunal's detention centre in Scheveningen near the Hague last Sunday, pleaded not guilty to the charges Tuesday.

Historic desk fetches $415,000 at Sotheby's royalty auction

NEW YORK (R) — The table at which Britain's love-struck King Edward VIII signed away his throne in 1936 was auctioned for $415,000 in New York Saturday, more than eight times what Sotheby's had expected.

The "abdication desk," a George III mahogany table circa 1755, had been estimated to sell for between $30,000 and $50,000, but rapid-fire bidding sent the price over $200,000 within 30 seconds.

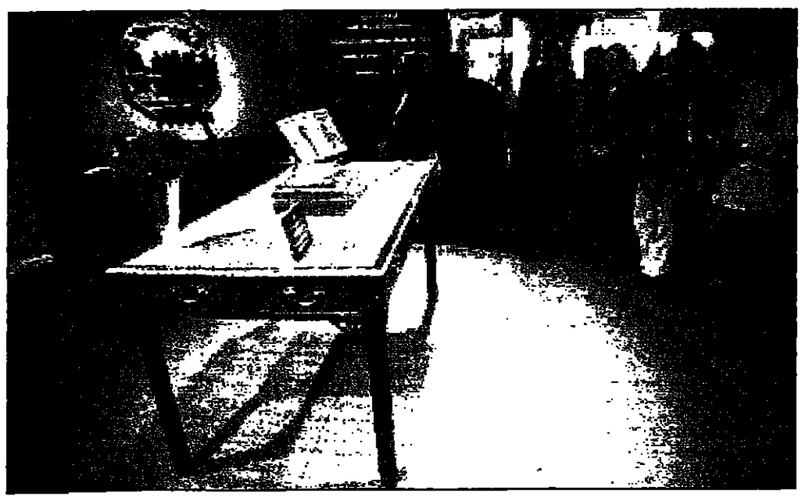
The desk, with a brass plaque inscribed "on this table King Edward VIII signed the instrument of abdication 10.30 a.m. on December 10th 1936," was bought by an anonymous bidder by telephone.

It fetched the highest price of any lot yet sold in the nine-day auction of items from the Paris home of the duke and duchess of Windsor.

The duke became King Edward VIII in January 1936 on the death of his father, George V, but abdicated to marry a divorcee, American Wallis Warfield Simpson.

The couple married in June 1937 and spent their lives at the forefront of the fashion and social worlds.

Several six-figure lots Saturday, the third day of bidding, included an Aubusson carpet ($244,500), a pair of Italian neo-classical silver console tables and paintings by Degas and Chilean artist Claudio Bravo.



The 'Abdication Desk' from which King Edward VIII abdicated the throne of England on Dec. 10, 1936, is viewed by visitors to Sotheby's auction house in New York February 18, the day before the opening of the auction of the collection of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor from their Paris home (Reuters photo)

For many buyers seeking a piece of royal history, money was no object.

A Cecil Beaton sketch of the duchess serving cocktails sold for $178,500, compared with its high estimate of $7,000, and a signed portrait of Turkey's Mustapha Ataturk which Sotheby's had estimated at between $200 and $400 fetched $39,100.

A Bernard Lorjou lithograph inscribed to the duchess and estimated at between $250 and $350 was worth $25,300 to one bidder.

A set of three shot glasses, dubbed "amusing" in the catalogue and estimated at $300 to $400, commanded $1,380. A pair of Austrian cigarette boxes put at $600 to $800 went for $24,150.

Other noteworthy lots included a pair of empire-style fauteuils which sold for $145,500 — 16 times the high estimate — and an untitled Andy Warhol painting inscribed To The Duchess which sold for just under $40,000, more than three times its high estimate.

More than 40,000 items from the couple's home are being sold by businessman Mohammed Fayed, father of Dodi Fayed who died in a car crash with Diana, princess of Wales, last year. Proceeds will benefit charities supported by Dodi Fayed and Diana.

Sotheby's estimated the total Windsor sale of furniture, paintings, decorations, books, photographs, coins, medals, jewellery and clothing at $5 million to $7 million, but by Saturday the total was already at $6,779,058.

Karachi youth appeals for help for wife

KARACHI (AFP) — A Karachi youth who this month broke a tribal taboo by secretly marrying an Afridi Pashtun girl urged Pakistani authorities Sunday not to hand over his beloved to her parents, claiming they would kill her.

"I know the tribal traditions. Some are barbaric in nature. If the girl is given to them, then there will be the death of my love," 30-year old Kanwar Ahsan told AFP. "Let my love live. I want my wife alive," he said as the tribesmen from the country's north warned that unless Riffat Afridi was handed over by Sunday the Pashtun community would call for a nationwide strike.

The Pashtuns claim Ms. Riffat was abducted by Mr. Ahsan, who is from the Urdu-speaking Mohajir community. They paralysed Karachi with a day-long strike on Feb. 11 that sparked violence in which two people died.

"We both have pledged to face any danger," said Mr. Ahsan, who is now in police custody. Police have not yet found Ms. Riffat and sources here said she was safe "in protective custody."

Elders of the Afridi tribe including Ms. Riffat's parents now say the girl was already married to her cousin Nizabat Khan, who has petitioned the Sindh High Court for her return.

UNDP chief visits Rwanda

KIGALI (AFP) — The administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) James Speth began a visit Sunday to Rwanda with a view to establishing contacts with political leaders there.

A UNDP statement on Mr. Speth's visit said he would also make stops in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo before departing Monday.

"The purpose of his visit is to establish personal contacts with political leaders of the region," said the statement for this U.N. body, which coordinates all U.N. activities in Rwanda.

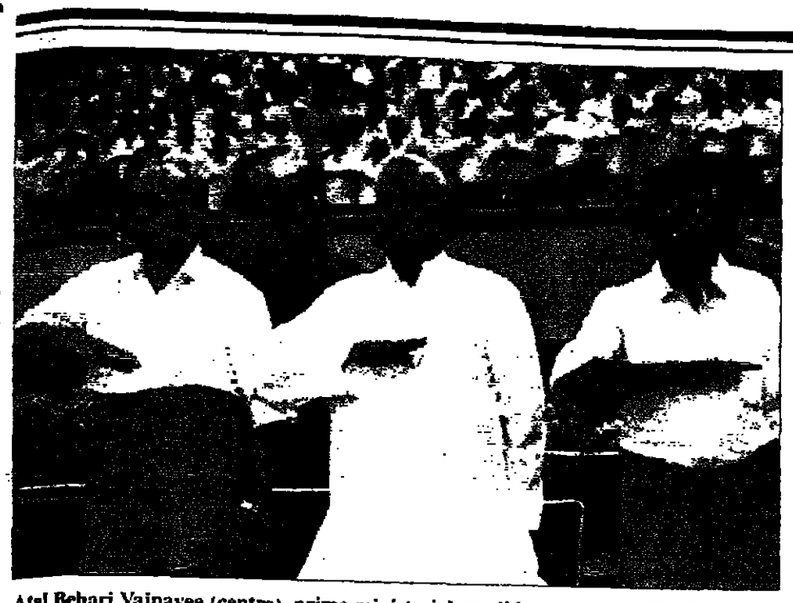
Mr. Speth also aims to "hear from governments what they expect from the United Nations and the UNDP as their partners in the rehabilitation/reconstruction process," noted the press release.

The UNDP administrator is also part of a U.N. working group on the Great Lakes region, recently established by the U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan.

According to the statement, "the outcomes of the trip are expected to critically contribute to the elaboration of strategy for the United Nations in the Great Lakes region."

Mr. Speth's visit closely follows that of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Sadako Ogata to Rwanda to discuss the plight of the thousands of refugees there, many of whom fled the former Zaire.

The UNDP works with over 150 governments for faster economic growth and to promote better living standards around the world. The U.N.'s permanent representative in Rwanda is Omar Bakhet.



Atal Behari Vajpayee (centre), prime ministerial candidate of India's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) salutes with his members at a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteers Organisation) rally in New Delhi. The RSS is a secretive organisation devoted to to remoulding Indian society into a Hindu nation (Reuters photo)

Would-be PM on hunger strike as violence hits Indian polls again

NEW DELHI (AFP) — The top candidate to become India's next prime minister vowed Sunday to continue a political hunger strike as the world's largest democracy voted during the second phase of violence-marred national elections.

Seven more deaths were recorded Sunday, along with around 30 during the first day of voting on Feb. 16, as hundreds of thousands of police and paramilitary personnel were deployed nationwide.

The trouble surrounding Sunday's balloting, involving 200 million eligible voters, was overshadowed by a "fast-unto-death" by Atal Behari Vajpayee.

The leader of the country's largest party, the right-wing Hindu nationalist BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party, Indian People's Party), announced the protest after a BJP coalition government in the key state of Uttar Pradesh was sacked Saturday after it fragmented and lost its majority.

The decision immediately led to a legal appeal by the nationalists and a war of words between the nation's top contenders for power.

The BJP — expected to win most seats in the ongoing national polls but to fall short of a majority — told a court Sunday that the dismissal was illegal.

The party also appealed to the national president to intervene to "end the continued defilement and denigration of the constitution."

Analysts said the affair undermined nationalist pledges to bring political stability to India.

The polls, to elect the country's fifth government within two years, are due to end March 7. The BJP is forecast to top the polls ahead of the once-dominant Congress and an outgoing multi-party coalition.

Sunday's polling was for 183 constituencies, with 222 decided on the opening day.

The BJP is currently looking for support for a Vajpayee-led coalition.

The Congress has been rejuvenated by a campaign by Sonia Gandhi, the widow of former premier Rajiv Gandhi. It and the coalition are expected to team up to try to stop the nationalists coming to power.

The 71-year-old Vajpayee, who flew to the capital from Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh Sunday, said he would fast until the state BJP government was reinstated. "The dismissal is ... unconstitutional and undemocratic," he said.

He said fair elections had been India's hallmark. Saturday's sacking was "a devious conspiracy" and it was his "moral responsibility" to oppose it.

The Congress and coalition parties argued that the sacking by the state governor, the Indian president's appointee, was justified since the BJP administration could no longer command a majority.

Congress President Sitaram Kesri described Mr. Vajpayee's action as "cheap drama."

The nationalists are accused by their rivals of planning a theocracy in place of the secular constitution.

Uttar Pradesh, with 140 million people, is the political heart of India, providing eight of its 12 prime ministers. The state authorities announced a security alert Sunday following Saturday's developments.

Election-related deaths were reported in several states, including four — all in clashes between political activists — in eastern Bihar, India's most lawless state.

A policeman was shot while on patrol in Orissa state on the east coast by suspected left-wing extremists opposed to the elections. In West Bengal, bandits reportedly killed two villagers near the border with Bangladesh.

About 30 election-related killings, plus fraud and intimidation of voters during the first leg of voting, led to 1,400 areas being ordered to organise new polls after the Feb. 16 voting.

Most affected areas were in Bihar. Results in Patna, the state capital, were declared null and void, as they were in 1991 elections.

There were also reports of armed clashes Sunday in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh.

Jailed mafia fatherhood feat stirs controversy

ROME (R) —The case of two mafia bosses who became fathers despite being in jail under a tough isolation regime has turned up the heat on a controversial Italian decision to relax prison rules for mobsters.

The apparently improbable fatherhood feat, managed by brothers Giuseppe and Filippo Graviano, came to light just as a government decree quietly eased the six-year-old "41 bis" rules under which most dangerous mafiosi have been held.

It also coincided with a fresh round of violence of the Naples mafia, the Camorra, in the southern port city, putting the spotlight once again on Italy's uphill battle to beat organised crime. Eleven people have died in the past two weeks.

The "41 bis" system, introduced after the mafia murders of star magistrates Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino in 1992, isolated bosses from each other, gave them two hours' fresh air a day and put them behind glass when their families visited.

The constitutional court ruled last November that, while legitimate, the severe regime should not prevent reeducation of mafiosi. That, magistrates say, made change almost inevitable.

The new, softer "41 bis" — its name comes from the relevant paragraph in the prison code — will allow bosses to meet other mafiosi during "fresh air" breaks, which will be increased to four hours a day from two.

Mafiosi will also be allowed to play football with other prisoners, use the library, see social workers for therapy and meet any children they have under age 12 with no glass screen.

Justice Minister Giovanni Maria Flick, in a news conference Friday at which details were announced, described the softening as a series of measures "to humanise detention."

"No one is lowering their guard or weakening the fight against the mafia," he said, adding the steps had been taken to ensure that a "41 bis" system could be allowed to continue while making it conform to the constitutional court's ruling.

A circular, signed by prisons Director Alessandro Margara, explained that controls would be stepped up and family visits video recorded to maintain standards.

But magistrates are up in arms.

"These new rules no longer guarantee the separation of the most dangerous mafiosi. Indeed, it makes it easier for them to be in touch with the outside world," said Antonio Ingroia, a Palermo prosecutor and former lieutenant of Borsellino.

"It seems to me as though the state is giving the impression of lowering its guard in the fight against the mafia."

Italy's national anti-mafia prosecutor, Pier Luigi Vigna, told La Repubblica newspaper Saturday he saw "a danger."

"Just when we're trying with video conferences to stop detainees under special regimes from meeting each other while on their way to court, contacts inside jail could become a way for bosses to pass on messages," he said.

Francesco Onorato, a mafia turncoat, testified to having heard mafia boss of bosses Salvatore Riina say during a pause in a trial in 1995: "The milk can be done" — meaning an official whose name was similar to a milk brand could now be killed.

The new video conference system will enable collaborators as well as senior bosses to "attend" a trial without leaving jail.

Luca Tescaroli was one of the prosecutors in the trial of top mafia bosses who packed explosives under a highway outside Palermo and blew up Falcone, the magistrate who made unprecedented inroads into the mafia and cracked its deadly code of "omerta" or silence. He, too, slammed the "41 bis" changes.

"We mustn't make the perennial mistake of considering the mafia an emergency topic whereas it is, in fact, an endemic plague that has to be combated systematically," Mr. Tescaroli said.

Magistrates, meanwhile, have opened an investigation into the Graviano fatherhood case.

The babies, both named Michele after their grandfather, were born last June and August while the fathers were under "41 bis".

Media reports said the mothers — who married the brothers in jail — became pregnant after artificial insemination using sperm stored in a clinic abroad before the arrests.

Japan failed satellite deals blow to space programme

TOKYO (R) — Japan's space agency said Sunday a multimillion dollar communications satellite is still inoperable after a domestically-developed rocket failed to send it into a proper orbit Saturday.

The agency is investigating why its H-2 rocket did not complete a second stage burn that scuttled the mission.

The failure comes at an inauspicious time for Japan's fledgling and expensive National Space Development Agency.

Japan's space agency was trying to turn the corner from being an expensive government project to a commercially viable satellite launching operation.

NASDA is also responsible for putting the Japanese government's next generation of digital broadcast satellites into orbit around 2000.

All of Japan's terrestrial networks are gearing up for the launch of the new BS-4 satellite because they will have been allotted one digital channel for nationwide broadcasting.

Saturday, a Japanese H-2 rocket failed to launch the satellite it was carrying after its second stage burned for too short a time, NASDA said.

It was the first time an H-2 rocket, Japan's first major rocket developed entirely with domestic technology, had failed.

The two-stage H-2 rocket blasted off from Tanegashima Space Centre in Kagoshima prefecture, southwestern Japan, about 1,000 km southwest of Tokyo, Saturday afternoon and released the satellite into space.

But the communications and broadcasting test satellite could not be put into the geostationary orbit as scheduled because of the second-stage rocket failure, it said.

The second stage was supposed to burn twice. But it burned properly for five minutes the first time, and then only for 44 seconds the second time, compared to the scheduled three minutes, it said.

Science and Technology Agency Director Sadakazu Tanigaki said that he was shocked by the failed satellite launch and pledged a thorough investigation into the causes.

"I take this seriously," Mr. Tanigaki told a news conference at Tanegashima Space Centre after the failed launch.

"It's a big shock because a series of h-2 rocket launches had been near perfect to date. I believe it is my responsibility to shed light on the cause of the failure in order to learn a lesson for the next launch," he said.

The 46.2 billion yen ($360 million), 2.2-tonne satellite, called comets or "kakehashi," (bridge) in Japanese, is one of the world's largest satellites. It carries a mobile antenna and advanced mobile communications equipment.

The satellite was scheduled to be used for experiments in new satellite broadcasting services, such as wide-band high-definition TV and regional broadcasting.

Other countries, such as the United States, Russia and China, created commercial launching operations out of technology developed for the military, but Japan's military activities and budget are limited by its post-war pacifist constitution.

Yet despite the lack of commercial launches so far, Japanese companies have quietly been developing expertise in the hope of tapping some of the potentially huge market. Rocket system corp, which was established to produce rockets and provide launch services for NASDA, is now marketing its services globally.

Mitsubishi Electric Corp 6503. It is aiming to become the first Japanese company to market satellites commercially.

Australian army not to be used in Indonesia riots

CANBERRA (R) — Australian troops would not be used to put down rioting in Indonesia, Australian Defence Minister Ian McLachlan said Sunday.

Mr. McLachlan said a security treaty between the two countries signed in early 1996 did not require Australia to help Indonesia deal with civil unrest.

"That treaty on security really requires us to consult in the event of those challenges," Mr. McLachlan told Channel Nine television in an interview.

"Whether they are internal or external (problems) ... the requirement is to consult. I don't believe it requires us to do anything else."

But he repeated Prime Minister John Howard's comment last week that Australia was concerned about Indonesia's ability to cope with social unrest stemming from its economic crisis.

"We are concerned about them. They are our closest friend, closest geographical friend," Mr. McLachlan said. "We are working very hard with them. They have some terrible problems."

Indonesia is suffering its worst economic crisis in decades, with the collapse of the rupiah currency and serious drought causing prices and unemployment to soar.

Riots over food price rises have erupted across the nation in recent weeks, with ethnic Chinese who control most of the country's commerce being targeted.

The sudden upheaval has prompted Australia to review its strategic policies, which are based on an economically booming Asia and a stable Indonesia acting as a buffer to Australia's north.

Indonesia ban on street protests comes into effect

JAKARTA (R) — A 25-day ban on street protests went into effect in Indonesia Sunday as human rights activists said five people were killed and 13 reported missing in rioting across the country this month.

Interior Minister Yogie Memet last week issued the ban on street protests for a period stretching from seven days before to seven days after the once-in-five-years general assembly of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) on March 1-11.

The order was issued as unrest mounted in the nation of 200 million people, facing its worst financial crisis in decades. Mobs angered by rising prices of food have attacked and burned shops in at least a score of towns in recent weeks.

Officials said tens of thousands of police and troops have been placed on alert in and around the capital Jakarta, where the MPR session will reelect President Suharto for a seventh five-year term on March 9.

There has been no major unrest in Jakarta despite tensions elsewhere in the country.

"In accordance with the law, it is forbidden for community groups to have street protests as a regulation issued by the interior minister says demonstrations are forbidden from seven days before (the MPR) until seven days after. It starts today," Jakarta military spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel D.J. Nachrowi said.

"The security forces will take firm action in accordance with the law against those who undertake street protests... (which) disturb community life and simultaneously cause disorder for the MPR session," Col. Nachrowi said.

He was not immediately able to say if political meetings or indoor gatherings were still allowed, and one Jakarta activist group said it was planning to hold a 30-minute "silent protest" in Jakarta Monday in a symbolic gesture of defiance.

However, Col. Nachrowi added that the Jakarta military command had not reached the stage of security forces in east and central Java, which had issued "shoot on the spot" orders after outbreaks of violence.

"Firm action does not mean shoot on the spot. We have a process of escalation. First we prohibit something, then we give a warning and then we act according to the law," he said without elaborating.

But Col. Nachrowi said up to Sunday conditions had been very good in Jakarta and there were no problems.

The official Antara news agency reported Sunday that Jakarta police spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Aritonang had called on the community to ignore fake pamphlets saying free rice would be given out at the parliament building where the MPR is to hold its session.

"I checked with the parliamentary secretariat and they have not issued a circular saying they would give out free rice. So I hope the community will not trust these pamphlets bearing the MPR logo," Col. Aritonang told reporters.

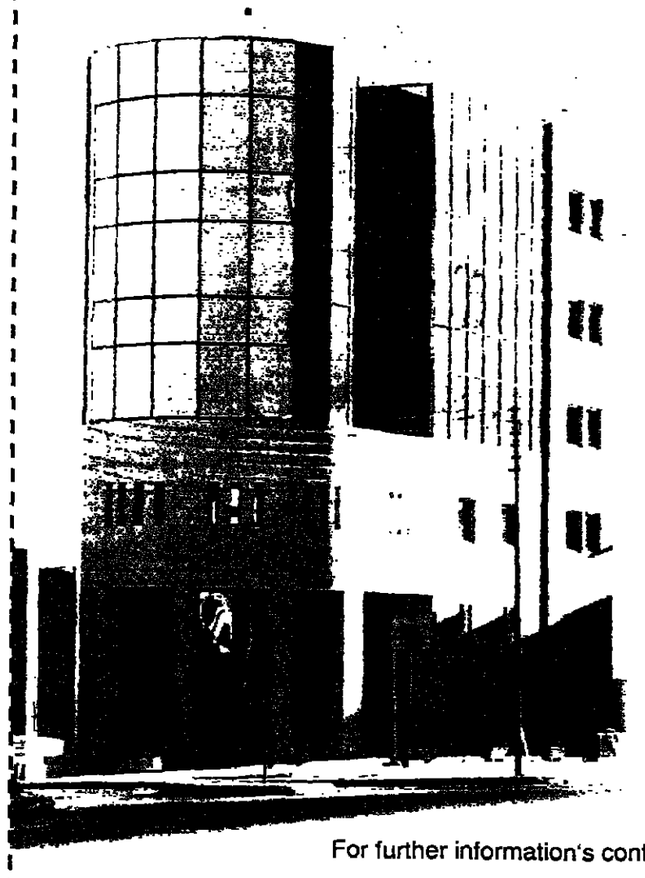
The Jakarta Post newspaper Sunday quoted three activist groups as saying in a joint statement that riots broke out in 20 towns across the nation as prices soared.

Troops opened fire in two towns last week, killing five people and injuring 10, the Indonesian Legal Aid Institute, the Independent Election Monitoring committee and the Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy said.

The groups also said 13 people were missing, including two officials from non-government organisations and 11 students.

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Deal signals solution

THE NEWS coming out of Baghdad yesterday spoke of a breakthrough in U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's attempts to avert a military showdown as a way of tackling the Iraq crisis. The atmosphere of optimism that immediately prevailed in the region upon hearing the news, however, was tempered by the scepticism that filtered out of Washington. Clinton administration officials were reported to be sceptical on two counts. The first was that they needed to hear about the deal from Mr. Annan himself and only after he left Baghdad. The second was about whether the U.S., rather than the U.N., intended to accept the terms of the deal.

The U.S. secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, had reacted to the "good news" emerging from Baghdad just before the deal was officially announced by saying that her country first needed to assess whatever Mr. Annan had agreed on with the Iraqi government in light of "our national interests."

Her statement thus posed a crucial question. Has the latest crisis in the Gulf been about U.S. interests in the region or over Baghdad's defiance of the U.N. Security Council resolutions? Ms. Albright's remarks were in sharp contrast with a declaration by the British foreign secretary, Robin Cook, who suggested that if Baghdad signed an agreement with the U.N. chief and abided by its terms it could see the sanctions lifted "in the fairly near future."

The international community is eager to hear that the parties involved in the crisis will be talking about international legitimacy and not their own narrow self-interests. In the knowledge that the U.S. knows where its best interests lie we do not think a perpetration of the conflict or a military strike against Iraq can serve the purpose of America's allies or this region's peoples. Thus if Ms. Albright is not going to listen to what some of her own people are saying she should try to see the "writing on the wall "elsewhere outside the U.S.

In any and all cases, the news from Baghdad last night gives us true hope that scepticism by the Americans or otherwise will soon turn not just into optimism but also into a lasting solution for the crisis.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Arab Al Yawm's Mohammad Subeihi said the Friday mosque preachers should dedicate their sermons to current affairs and issues of concern to the public rather than petty issues. The whole Middle East is facing grave dangers with the threat of war on Iraq and Israel's ongoing repression against the Palestinian people. but preachers choose to talk about fires during happy occasions and weddings or other matters that do not appeal to the worshippers, said the writer. He said that the "boring" sermons tend to drive away worshippers, many of whom avoid arriving at the mosque before the end of the sermon. The preachers, who are appointed by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, should follow the example of the government which has been calling for national unity and preparedness to deal with any situation resulting from possible military operations in the Gulf, Subeihi said. He called on the preachers to follow the example of the companions of the Prophet Mohammad who used to turn the mosque prayers into a weekly Islamic conference dedicated to important issues affecting public life.

Al Dustour's Mohammad Daoud said everyone in Jordan, including the government and the opposition parties, agrees on the need to support the Iraqi people, but it seems there is a difference in the manner of expressing such support. Although there is no actual need to stage demonstrations to show solidarity with the Iraqi people, there should not be such government insistence on banning marches, especially if they are held peacefully, Daoud said. The government should have taken measures to prevent disturbances, but it ought first to have allowed people to demonstrate in an organised manner, added the writer. Now that disturbances have occurred the two sides must resort to reason and logic and open dialogue leading to an agreement on ways to deal with any consequences resulting from a military strike on Iraq, he said. Daoud said, despite the violence in Ma'an there is still room for dialogue, and there is time for the opposition groups to give up their determination to defy the government and save the country from further acts of violence. The writer said national interests must be placed above all other considerations, and the various parties should stand united in the face of all eventualities.

Economic Review — Dr. Yusuf Mansur

All the president's women

PRESIDENT BILL Clinton may prove to be the best president the United States has had in its recent history, yes, including some favourites such as Ronald Reagan and George Bush — especially for women and minorities. And should he accept a peaceful solution to the Iraqi inspection crisis, the world will have been treated to exceptionally wise U.S. leadership that mirrors the soul of a kinder, gentler nation something which past leaderships have spoken about, but enforced with bloodshed.

Clinton has done more for women and minorities in America than his conservative predecessors have. Both the Reagan and Bush administrations amassed trillions of dollars worth of government debt which they spent not on upholding "family values" or repairing the human and physical infrastructure of the United States, but on war machinery and back-breaking schemes aimed at destroying fictitious foreign devils and evil empires.

In his heyday, George Bush spoke of family values and how he wanted to create a stronger family in the United States. However, to create the conditions that are necessary for the wealthiest country in the history of man/womankind to enhance the role and unity of the family in society would have cost the American government almost US$14 billion.

This money would have been spent on creating daycare centres for the children of working women and giving longer maternity leaves to women instead of the two-week sick (not maternity) leave that was legally allowed. (The U.S. is behind the rest of the world in this regard where one-third of the countries of the world grant women more than three months of paid maternity leave: Hungary grants 24 weeks, Italy five months, Canada 17 weeks, Spain and Romania 16 weeks, and Jordan 12 weeks.) The women of America had to leave their two-week old babies with women they hardly knew while they went to work.

Marriages also suffered under the guidance of the conservative leadership, and divorce rates skyrocketed as the economic pressure against the family mounted. It is not a secret that many couples that were on welfare decided not to marry so that women would not lose their welfare privileges and thus opted to remain "in sin," only to satisfy the strict rules of the non-caring conservatives.

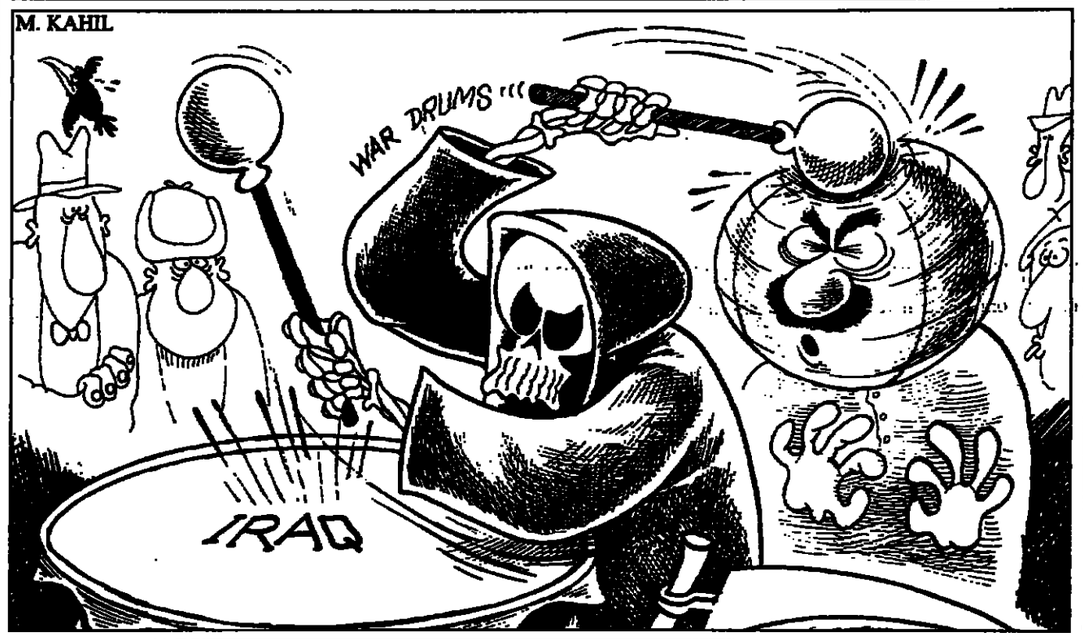
Even school lunches, a scheme that was started under the Johnson administration to provide children with school lunches, did not escape the "mercy" of the conservatives. Under the Reagan administration it was decided that ketchup was not a "condiment" but was in fact a vegetable. Thus, the school lunch (which according to the Food and Drug Administration was already high in fat) became more saturated, and the malnourished children of the poor suffered more. Yes, the children of America received no mercy when it came to budget cuts. Still, no one suffered more than single mothers whose numbers increased with the onslaught of the recession-creating tactics of Reagan and Bush.

On the other hand, while universities and learning institutions saw their budgets cut as the conservative touted the banner that education was not a public good and therefore should be completely private, arms dealers worldwide became rich as tax dollars went to support some anti-communist cause here and there. Under the Clinton administration, the earnings gap between the earnings of a typical white American household ($46000) and that of an African American household ($23000) closed slightly as more African Americans received more and better-paying jobs. Minorities in general fared better under Clinton than they have under the administrations of the last two decades.

Under the Clinton administration, and in spite of the conservative-controlled Congress, women saw their family leaves expand to 12 weeks under the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act. Clinton spoke of information superhighways and the "global village," not Star Wars and Desert Storm. Under this administration women in America have done well, spending on education has risen, and public health schemes have made respectable progress in spite of the death of more humane schemes under the scalpel of a conservative Congress.

What remains to be seen is if the Clinton administration will be as good for women around the world as it has been for women in the U.S. It has given, so far, a brighter, gentler meaning to "world leadership"; maybe it is time to shun the ways of past administrations in dealing with the Middle East. The children and women of Iraq have suffered enough as a result of the Gulf conflict, regardless of who is to blame.

M. KAHIL



The law that 'stifles' free opinion and has Roger Garoudy on trial

By Pascal B. Karmy

THE WELL-KNOWN French author Roger Garoudy is presently on trial before a French court in Paris for having contested the number of six million Jews allegedly killed by Nazi Germany and doubted the existence of gas chambers for exterminating the Jews during World War II (his book "Les mythes fondateurs de la politique Israelienne" refers).

Mr. Garoudy is on trial by virtue of the Gayssot Law dated May 3, 1990. This law adds to the law on the Freedom of the Press of 1881, another paragraph 24bis which provides, inter alia, as follows: "Shall be liable to the penalties stipulated in paragraph 6 of Article 24 all persons who would contest the existence of one or more crimes committed against humanity as defined in Article 6 of the Charter of the International Military Tribunal annexed to the London Agreement of August 1946."

Article 6 of the Nuremberg International Military tribunal provides, inter alia,: "The following acts, or any of them, are crimes coming within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal for which shall be individual responsibility": (a) Crimes against peace (b) War Crimes (c) Crimes against humanity: namely murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population." (See Cases and Materials on International Law by D.J. Harris).

It should be pointed out that many members of the French National Assembly including in particular Jacques Chirac the president of the Republic, contested the Gayssot Law on the ground that it suppresses the expression of opinion and prevents research on historical facts including those on the so-called Holocaust. In particular Mr. Touban a member of the National Assembly stated that he had impugned the principle upon which the Gayssot Law was based, because it determines historical truth by a law instead of being decided by history itself. History brings out the truth and it is not for the law to impose it. This Law, Touban adds, "leads us unconsciously to penalise political and opinion offences. Thus this law constitutes a legal and political error. One year after the passing of the law we could now examine in a cool-headed manner the validity of this law and the inopportune and inappropriate offence which it lays down."

The Gayssot Law relied on the conclusions of the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal but its greatest defect is in its proceedings in that the tribunal did not adopt the legal rules and procedure with respect to proof and conviction of the accused which are normally applied by ordinary courts of law.

Let us see what Mr. Garoudy has said about the Jewish Holocaust to make him liable under the Gayssot Law. To begin with it should be observed that the term Holocaust was the brainchild of the Jewish author Elie Wiesel following the publication of his book entitled "The Night" in 1958. The term became popular especially after the projection of the film "The Holocaust." Garoudy says the purpose of the film was to show that the crime against the Jews was an exceptional event and cannot possibly be compared with the massacres of other Nazi victims not even with any other crimes recorded in ancient or modern history. It is alleged that the sufferings and death of the Jews have a sacrificial character and are clothed with divinity similar to the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ according to Christian theology, thus the martyrdom of the Jews became "irreducible" in respect to any other and by its sacrificial character was considered divine. Indeed a rabbi went so far as to say that "The Creation of the State of Israel is the response of God to the Holocaust."

Mr. Garoudy goes on to argue that the assassination of one innocent person whether he is a Jew or not constitutes a crime against humanity. And if the number of victims is of no importance in this regard why should we therefore cling, for more than 50 years, to the fatidic number of six millions.

On the other hand we do not treat as unimpeachable the number of victims of non-Jews in Katyn, Dresden or those of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and to which no golden number was given while the number of six million was made sacrosanct. In point of fact different numbers are put forward by historians and research bodies. For example the American Year Book No. 5702 of 1941-1942 states that after the maximum expansion of Nazi Germany including Russia and Germany itself in 1941, there were in Europe three million, one hundred ten thousand and seven hundred twenty (3,110,720). Where do the six million come from Garoudy asks, and adds one cannot fight the Nazi horrors by pious lies but by truth which is the best indictment of barbarity.

In other words Garoudy did not deny the killing of the Jews by the Nazis nor its horror, but contested the exaggerated number. Even the new Israeli historians themselves do not agree on the exact number of the Nazi Jewish victims.

The trial of Garoudy in Paris is indeed a surprise to all the lovers of freedom and seekers of truth in as opposed to myths. And it is the more astonishing that France, which is well-known in the world for its liberty and freedom of expression and opinion since the French Revolution, should have accepted and tolerated such legislation as the Gayssot Law. The law is likely to stifle free opinion and suppress genuine research on the question of crimes against humanity not in France only but in other countries which may follow suit.

Human Rights File

High court rulings and constitutionality

By Waleed M. Sadi

IN ACTUAL terms, the recent High Court of Justice ruling nullifying the amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law was not a judicial breakthrough as first thought. The court's decision was established on the narrow ground that the government's adoption of these amendments as a temporary law was unconstitutional on the "technical" ground that the adoption procedure violated Article 94 of the Constitution. It will be recalled that the said article stipulates that temporary legislation can be adopted only under limited conditions which the High Court, in this instance, found lacking. In other words, the court's finding against the controversial amendments was on the judges finding no pressing reasons for adopting the temporary law without consulting Parliament and receiving its endorsement. This makes the decision of the court in the case under examination technical rather than substantive since the government can easily rectify the shortcomings complained of by reintroducing the temporary law to Parliament again in either its existing form or in an amended form.

What is really disappointing about the much hailed court's verdict is the non-adjudication of the substantive issues pertaining to freedom of the press. There is nothing in the court's decision that suggests that the issue of freedom of the press or freedom of expression which are really the core constitutional issues were ever considered by the high judges. Had the honourable judges expanded on their decision by also addressing these central issues as well, the court's deliberations and ruling would have indeed been a milestone in the annals of the democratisation process in the country.

Of course the judges in question felt no need to rest their case on grounds other than the ones raised by Article 94 of the Constitution. This judicial approach is defensible because judges often avoid raising issues that are not indispensable to their final judgement. Still, there was a rare opportunity for the imminent judges sitting on the bench of one of the highest courts of the land to also expand the basis of their historic judicial intervention by passing a judgement on the core points as well.

There will come a time when our high courts will address not only issues touching on freedom of opinion but also the kind of issues raised when last week's "illegal" demonstration in support of Iraq was crushed by force. There were two sets of juridical issues raised then, one touching on the "right" of people to manifest their feelings and opinions on any set of subjects of private or public concern. The other is the "prerogative "of the state to prevent any such public demonstrations under certain conditions. The rule of thumb is that the public has an inherent right to demonstrate peacefully in support of policy considerations that are not contrary to the organic law of the land. The government , on the other hand, has the duty to prevent the outbreak of disorder that could threaten public safety. Whether the government's initial decision to ban the controversial demonstrations in the first place was constitutional is something on which our courts would have to pass judgement at one stage or another. The sooner the judiciary pronounces itself on this immediate question the better it would be for all sides. Once the constitutionality of holding mass demonstrations or rallies is determined, we would need to articulate in a judicial manner when these constitutional rights can be curtailed by some overriding factors. In principle the state would need to show beyond a shadow of doubt the compelling reasons for revoking the right of the public to hold a rally. The reasons must not be arbitrary or unreasonable or conjectural. This is where the judicial system may articulate some guidelines for the executive branch to follow in such situations.

Hopefully the High Court will one day pass judgement on the Election Law, citizenship rights, habeus corpus and prison conditions. We need to encourage the judiciary to explore the uncharted constitutional issues still facing the Kingdom and pronounce itself on them. In due course, the existing Council for the Interpretation of the Constitution referred to in Article 122 of the Constitution should be phased out as an anachronistic organ in our system of laws.

LETTERS

Look who's the warmonger

To the editor:

AS CLINTON'S private life goes from bizarre to absurd so does the situation in the Middle East. There is a growing concern in the Middle East that with the next presidential scandal (as sure as sunrise) there may be more collateral damage inflicted on the region than all the wars of the last 50 years combined.

Back home on our national front, I am happy to discover that our parliament is as politically potent and relevant as ever, making righteous statements and taking proper actions in the face of the oncoming crises by discussing the beauty of female anatomy during the Eid.

Alternatively it may just be a clever ploy employed by our resourceful MPs to disguise their opinion of the crisis through clever referrals to either bloc and its effect on the political stability of the region. Specially in light of the fact that any expression of views on foreign policy can no longer be tolerated for fear we may once again end up on the wrong side of the fence.

Not to say that the blame for this crisis lays in its entirety with the U(n).S.A, there has to be a relatively blind individual not to see that some people are really doomed to repeat history. The mechanisms of a bluff seem not to be crystal clear to the policy making bodies of our friends to the east. Indeed some major mechanisms in evaluating whether one has won or lost seems to be a bit hazy over there.

Taking advantage of being knee-deep in the absurd, the U.S. is showing its sincere emotions of sympathy for the Iraqi people by asking the U.N. to increase the oil-for-food deal to $5.2 billion nearly doubling what Iraq already receives. I do not know if I am in thinking that maybe if the U.S. really wants to show the Iraqi people that they bear them no ill will they would try to refrain from bombing them.

Irrespective of the Iraqi initiative it seems that a decision has been taken in the surgically clean hallways of power to bomb them. Even now as the Iraqis are desperately trying to finish the "Bed & Breakfast in presidential palaces" brochure before spring break to catch the vacationing crowds, the U.S. administration new travel agents issued a statement condemning the prohibitive rates of two loaves of bread/night for double occupancy.

As the tip of the ironical pyramid tilts wildly overhead before it comes crashing down on us in the next few days I can only think that it is all being perpetrated by an individual who at one point in his life had strong opinions against an administration going to war over mundane political matters.

Ahmad Tabba
Amman

Caucasian cauldron

By Gwynne Dyer

THIS YEAR'S assassination attempt on Georgia's President Eduard Shevardnadze began with a rocket-propelled grenade smashing into the front of his armoured car as he drove home through Tbilisi just after dark. Ten to fifteen people then fired automatic weapons and grenades at the motorcade for several minutes. Two of Shevardnadze's bodyguards and one of the ambushers were killed, but the 70-year-old president was unharmed.

"It must be a miracle to survive twice," said Shevardnadze, who was the target of an equally pyrotechnical murder attempt in 1995. "Miracles happen only by the will of the Lord." A strange way for a former Communist Party boss and the Soviet Union's last foreign minister to put it, but if Bill Clinton goes to church and Saddam Hussein builds mosques, why not?

Besides, Shevardnadze's life has changed so much since those days that maybe he really has got religion. Ten years ago he was a global statesman, travelling the world as Gorbachev's foreign minister and helping to end the Cold War. Now he runs a very poor country of only 5 million people in the Middle East's northern annexe, so to speak (Georgia is a Christian enclave in a largely Muslim area), and people keep trying to kill him in shoot-outs straight out of James Bond.

Who is trying to kill him? Shevardnadze blames 'reactionary elements' in Russia, the former imperial ruler, who are still not reconciled to Georgia's independence: "They cannot forgive Afghanistan, the Berlin Wall, European liberation, oil pipelines, and the Eurasian transport corridor." He's certainly right that oil pipelines and geography have a lot to do with it.

The oil is around and under the Caspian Sea, a long way east of Georgia, but many of the best pipeline routes to bring it to world markets run through Georgia. However, Russian interests, anxious to get both strategic leverage and lucrative transit revenues, are fighting to ensure that new pipelines follow the existing route across Russian territory to the Black Sea.

"Very powerful forces want a different solution of the question linked to the transportation of oil through Georgia," said Shevardnadze, insinuating that the money to pay the hit-team was raised on Russian soil. That may be true (though it need not mean the Russian government was involved). But the gunmen themselves were certainly Georgians, and the WAY these disputes get settled is distinctively Caucasian.

The Caucasus is the 'other Balkans',

The Caucasus is the 'other Balkans', another border region contested for centuries by rival Christian and Muslim empires (in this case Russian, Turkish and Iranian).

another border region contested for centuries by rival Christian and Muslim empires (in this case Russian, Turkish and Iranian). Here, too, imperial policy combined with mountainous geography to produce a tangle of relatively small ethnic and religious groups — and in the best mountaineer tradition, what they love best is their families, their clans, and their guns. It makes them hard to govern.

Since independence in 1991, Georgia has fought a civil war. It has lost part of its territory to a rebel Muslim ethnic minority, the Abkhaz (who had Russian help). Shevardnadze came to power after a bloody coup, and independent Georgia's first president, the Soviet-era dissident hero Zviad Gamsakhurdia, committed suicide.

Gamsakhurdia's military commander, Loti Kobalia, was sentenced to death for treason in 1996. The militia that helped bring Shevardnadze to power, the Mkhedrioni ('horsemen'), turned against him because he was not taking a hard enough line with the Abkhaz and the Russians, and its leaders were accused of plotting the 1995 assassination attempt and jailed.

A wild ride, but Georgia's post-independence history has been no more turbulent that that of the Azerbaijanis, the Armenians, or the Chechens. Indeed, the wars elsewhere in the Caucasus have been a good deal worse — and they could be coming back.

Consider events in Armenia this month. There was no bloodshed, but President Levon Ter-Petrosian was brought down by a parliamentary coup when half his party defected to the hardline opposition. Their major complaint against Ter-Petrosian was that he was too ready to compromise on Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian-populated enclave within Azerbaijan that has been under Armenia's control (together with a good deal of surrounding Azerbaijani territory) since a 1994 ceasefire ended six years of war.

There is now heavy pressure on the Caucasian states to settle their disputes so the oil can flow smoothly. Most of the pressure on Armenia comes from the U.S. (which gives more foreign aid per capita to Armenia than anywhere else except Israel), and Ter-Petrosian recently agreed that Azerbaijan could have the rest of its territory back before talks begin on a final settlement giving Nagorno-Karabakh almost complete autonomy — but within Azerbaijan.

That was too much for Armenian hardliners, and Ter-Petrosian has been replaced for the moment by Robert Kocharian, ex-president of the Nagorno-Karabakh 'republic'. Kocharian will be running for president of Armenia in the elections of March 16 , together with Vahan Hovanesyan (now in prison), a leader of the recently unbanned Dashnak Party, and several other ultra-nationalists.

Peace may be slipping away in Armenia. It would certainly have collapsed in Georgia if the assassins had got Shevardnadze last week. It's probably not all over yet in the Caucasus — and as in the case of the (far worse) Balkan horrors of the past few years, this helps to shape our view of post-cold war Europe as a cauldron of ethnic violence. But it is not true.

Bad as these conflicts have been, they happened exactly where you would have expected them to, and they are basically very local events. The larger reality, up in the densely populated industrial parts of Europe, is that half the continent's people have removed tyrannical governments by non-violent revolutions in the past decade, that 20 new states have emerged — and that outside the Caucasus and former Yugoslavia, hardly anybody got hurt.

U.S.-Iran wrestling diplomacy breaks barriers

By Steven Swindells
Reuters

TEHRAN — A visit by American wrestlers to Iran has emerged as one of the most intriguing diplomatic manoeuvres seen in the tortured relations between the two nations in the last 20 years.

Iran-watchers and diplomats in Tehran on Sunday said the participation of five world-class U.S. sportsmen at an emotion-packed wrestling tournament which ended on Friday had broken some long-held taboos.

The rapturous support given to the U.S. team by 12,000 Iranian sport fans and the sight of the stars and stripes flag unfurled in the Islamic state and not, as is the custom, being set ablaze were unprecedented in Iran since its 1979 revolution.

"Slowly things are moving on. It is all done at a deliberate pace... but each time it marks a new chapter which cannot be turned back," said one seasoned Tehran-watcher.

The wrestlers' visit has raised comparisons with Washington's "ping-pong diplomacy" with China in the 1970s when a team of American table tennis players went to China as a prelude to improved ties between the two states.

However, formal ties between the two governments are a distant prospect and any possible rapprochement is overshadowed by Washington's threat that it may impose sanctions against French oil firm Total SA for its role in a $2 billion offshore gas development project in Iran.

Iran's paramount spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, backed by powerful conservative allies across a wide spectrum of state bodies, has shown no signs in public of softening Iran's anti-American stance.

Hardline newspapers, at least one parliamentary deputy and other Iranian officials have denounced the wrestlers' visit.

"Our people did not view these sports envoys as the envoys of the leaders of the White House and received them only from a sporting angle," the Persian-language Kayhan daily reported.

Many of the crowd at the four-day wrestling tournament were united in saying that they bore no grudges against Americans and were won over by the members of the U.S. team who waved Iranian flags to the crowd and carried pictures of Ayatollah Khamenei.

"Khamenei is nowhere close to fundamentally reassessing his policy towards the united states ... wrestlers can be tolerated but formal dialogue remains far down the road," said one diplomat.

But cracks are emerging in the "solid and high wall" Ayatollah Khamenei insists be erected against his bitter enemy.

Further signs of a potential slow thaw in Iran-U.S. relations will come over the next days with a visit by American foreign policy experts to a conference in Tehran.

Former national security advisers and ambassadors from the Washington-based Nixon Centre for Peace and Freedom and the Middle East Institute are to participate in the seminar on regional politics.

Their presence will be another episode in a growing list of small, but in their own way remarkable, shifts in relations between the two states which have been poisoned since Islamist students stormed the U.S. embassy in Tehran in 1979 and held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days.

These changes were led by Iranian President Mohammad Khatami's historic address on U.S. television last month when the moderate Shiite cleric expressed regret that the hostage incident had hurt Americans' feeling and called for increased dialogue to bring about a "crack in the wall of mistrust" between the two states.

Mr. Khatami, who was elected by a landslide vote in May on promises of breathing fresh civil freedoms into the 19-year-old revolution, has in sharp contrast to Ayatollah Khamenei called for contacts between Iranian and American academics and artists.

U.S. President Bill Clinton — who launched a drive when he came to office in 1993 to isolate Iran for supporting "terrorism," seeking nuclear weapons and its hostility to the Middle East peace process — has also moved the game on.

In a speech last month to mark the end of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, Mr. Clinton said Washington still had "real differences with some Iranian policies" but that "these are not insurmountable."

Iran's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi took the plunge at the world economic forum meeting in Switzerland this month by shaking the hand of Washington's U.N. Ambassador Bill Richardson.

"You may think that's a very minor step, but in diplomacy that says a lot," Mr. Richardson said at the time.

But the sensitivities remain — Mr. Kharrazi had to defend himself this week against parliament accusations that he had actually shaken hands with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who was not even at Davos.

Shbeilat charged with inciting riots, slander

(Continued from page 1)

killed and over 25 others injured. The government, which has imposed a curfew on Ma'an, blamed Mr. Shbeilat for inciting the trouble there.

Mr. Shbeilat, who was pardoned by King Hussein in 1992 and in 1996, after receiving prison terms ranging from three years to life imprisonment on charges of treason and lese majeste, was ordered detained for 15 days by State Prosecutor Lieutenant Colonel Mahmoud Obeidat for further questioning, the sources said.

He was interrogated by the state prosecutor on Saturday in the presence of Defence Attorney Hussein Mjalli, president of the Jordan Bar Association — one of three attorneys who volunteered to defend Mr. Shbeilat.

Atty. Najib Rashdan and former prime minister and former director of the General Intelligence Department, Ahmad Obeidat, will also defend Mr. Shbeilat in his third case before the state security court.

Mr. Shbeilat was arrested by officials near Qatraneh, 90 kilometres south of Amman, while he was on his way back to the capital after delivering a sermon in the Ma'an town's mosque on Thursday evening.

Minister of Interior Natheer Rasheed blamed Mr. Shbeilat for the pro-Iraqi demonstrations which occurred following the morning prayers and resulted in clashes between the demonstrators and police.

"Mr. Shbeilat was responsible for what has happened and he will be tried for instigating riots," Mr. Rasheed had told the Jordan Times.

Mr. Shbeilat was tried in 1992 for treason, and was sentenced to death, but his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, and was immediately pardoned by King Hussein.

Four years later, he was tried for lese majeste at the State Security Court and was sentenced to three years imprisonment term. In 1997 he was released by His Majesty the King.

Meanwhile, the Jordan People's Democratic Party (Hashd) has issued a statement condemning the arrest of one of its members in Irbid, Mohammad Abu Rub, on Sunday.

The statement said that this step by the government "is only intended to terrorise the citizens and forbid them from expressing themselves freely."

The government banned demonstrations two weeks ago. It has said its decision to ban protests was not an anti-Iraqi measure but was meant to prevent "saboteurs from infiltrating rallies."

Annan brokers deal with Iraq

(Continued from page 1)

its own interests in Iraq if it was unhappy with any deal reached by Annan.

"It is possible that he will come with something we don't like in which case we will pursue our national interest," Ms. Albright said on the ABC television programme "This Week."

"It really is premature to talk about what he [Annan] has (negotiated)," she said.

Washington would accept nothing short of unconditional access for U.N. inspectors to suspected weapons sites. "There is no question. He [Saddam] has to back down," she said.

Asked if the United States would accept the proposed deal, Mr. Eckhard said: "The secretary-general is authorised to enter into an agreement with any member state."

"He has carefully tried to build Security Council support for the parameters within which he feels he has stayed in his talks with the Iraqi authorities these last couple of days.

"He expects that what emerges from these talks he will be able to sell to the Security Council," Mr. Eckhard said.

Details of any deal would not be made public by the United Nations until Mr. Annan had presented it to the Security Council, a U.N. official said.

Mr. Annan is expected to leave Baghdad on Monday afternoon for Paris and reach New York on Tuesday morning. He plans to brief the Security Council on Tuesday afternoon.

Mr. Eckhard said Mr. Annan had been in touch during his stay in Baghdad with leaders of the five permanent Security Council members — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States.

Mr. Annan has had very little room for manoeuvre in his talks with Iraqi leaders, knowing that any deal must enshrine the principles of full Iraqi compliance with U.N. Security Council resolutions and no dilution of UNSCOM's role.

Jordan walks a tightrope in preparing for Gulf crisis scenarios

(Continued from page 1)

But the recent unrest was a bleak reminder of possible turmoil that could be unleashed across the region if U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's current mission to Baghdad failed to defuse the crisis, analysts said.

A new U.S. attack against Iraq — with virtually no official support and deep popular opposition in the Arab World — could only reinforce the frustration at Arab impotence and the desire for retaliation that has been blamed for past terrorist attacks against mainly U.S. targets.

Jordanian forces have been put on alert and security around key state installations and potential Western targets has been stepped up against possible acts of sabotage by local and foreign parties.

Earlier this month, police foiled an attempt to throw a petrol bomb at the British embassy in Amman.

While pro-Iraqi rallies have swept many Arab countries — even cities in the United States and Europe — Jordanians have been angered by the ban that has prevented them from venting their anger at what is widely seen as Washington's double standards in applying policies vis-a-vis Iraq on the one hand and Israel on the other and from showing their support for Iraqis.

Many politicians say the government imposed the ban in the hope of preventing a repetition of the pro-Iraqi fervour seen in the run-up to the 1991 Gulf crisis when daily rallies were common events in the Kingdom.

Any attempt to reverse the ban or turn a blind eye to shows of public support for Iraq will send the wrong signals to the opposition, pressing for the resignation of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, said a former minister, who asked not to be identified further.

In the last few days the opposition has condemned tough security policies and, together with 13 deputies in the 80-seat Lower House, wants Dr. Majali to quit office.

The opposition has rejected official explanation that the ban on rallies was necessary to protect the Kingdom's stability and was not meant to be an "anti-Iraqi measure."

Opposition leaders are seeking the release of Jordan Engineers Association's President Leith Shbeilat, who was detained by police three days ago on grounds he had instigated the violence in Ma'an. He is expected to be tried by the Security Court, his third trial on similar or related charges in less than six years.

In a country where the leadership has always been ahead of public opinion, officials have again found themselves walking over political landmines in dealing with the latest Iraq-U.S. standoff, the analysts said.

"Jordan is trying to find a middle ground to satisfy the needs of the U.N. and the U.S. as well as the Iraqi desire to have the economic sanctions lifted," said the former minister. "But this is proving to be very demanding and difficult."

Jordan, like most Arab countries and others, has urged a diplomatic solution to end the Iraqi crisis and has announced that Amman's airspace cannot be used for any attack on Iraq.

Officials insist the government shares the people's resentment at the unstinting U.S. support for Israel.

But they are making it clear that Jordan is unwilling to set the clock back to 1991, when Amman's perceived pro-Iraq support left it shunned by Gulf and Western allies for years and inflicted massive losses on its fragile economy.

Since then, Jordan has shifted alliances, repaired its damaged ties with the West, distanced itself from the Iraqi regime even though it maintained trade links, and made peace with Israel.

However, these rapid changes, coupled with widespread frustration over rising poverty and unemployment, appear to have widened the gap between the government and the people, some analysts fear.

"Any attack against Iraq will inflame people's sentiments to an extent that will be unpredictable," said Abdul Latif Arabiyat, head of the influential opposition Islamic Action Front.

"The situation is worrisome and uncertain. When a disastrous war erupts, no one can predict what will happen... no one will be able to control what will happen," he added.

"There isn't a single country that can spare the danger of upheavals... This is why we hope that Jordan and the other Arab states take a stand in tune with that of the people."

Political activists and some columnists have also criticised state-run television for taking a biased stand in the Iraq-U.S. crisis, accusing its management of hardly running any footage of the pro-Baghdad rallies held in other Arab states.

They have downplayed government attempts to blame the latest spate of unrest and potential security threats on outside parties and countries, including Iran — after a recent official thaw in bilateral ties following years of tension.

The officials maintain that Jordan is obliged to take any and all measures to preserve its stability in a possible war that could trigger unpredictable and dangerous reactions.

In a television interview late on Saturday, Dr. Majali hinted that Amman might declare a state of emergency if hostilities break out in the Gulf.

Jordan's worries are many.

"Any attack on Iraq will harm neighbouring countries," said Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Jawad Anani. "...This might lead to the fragmentation of the region, the creation of mini-states and the re-drawing of the region's map in a manner that does not serve Arab interests."

A strike could send tens of thousands of Iraqi refugees to Jordan, disrupt supplies of cheap Iraqi oil and close a vital market for local industries when Jordan is already grappling with a stagnant economy.

Jordan, which had to deal with the sudden influx of over 1.5 million people who fled during the 1990-91 Gulf war, has said it will close its eastern border to prevent a similar flood.

And it has assured citizens it will get oil from other sources, though at market rates. This would likely cost the debt-ridden economy $600 million a year.

Army imposes curfew, starts sweep of Ma'an

(Continued from page 1)

among the people," said another citizen, referring to 1989 and 1996 when the army entered the city to restore order.

"We hope that things would calm down. But if they decide to arrest people this might cause more tension," said one resident.

One resident said that what happened on Friday and Saturday was "nothing but a vent of frustration over the conditions of the people, especially the young."

"Most of the young men here are unemployed and they want any opportunity to express themselves because they simply have nothing to loose," another elderly man said.

Before the 1990-91 Gulf war, most of the people in this town worked in the transportation sector, ferrying Iraq-bound goods from the Kingdom's southern port of Aqaba.

But U.N. restrictions on exports to Iraq forced many out of business.

Meanwhile, police on Sunday exhumed the body of Kateb, who was buried on Saturday after his relatives stormed a Ma'an hospital and took his body.

Petra News Agency said that the body was exhumed to enable the coroner to determine the cause of his death.

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Group of Eight ministers call for flexible labour markets

LONDON (AFP) — Finance and employment ministers from the world's richest economies presented an unusually common front Sunday in stressing the need for more flexible labour markets in a jobs-creation programme that will be put to a Group of Eight (G-8) summit in May.

The ministers, ending a two-day meeting in London, were united in a statement that supported what has been called the third-way approach to job creation — deregulation of the labour market, while protecting the "most vulnerable."

The joint statement said that the plan would "generate new job opportunities and tackle unemployment and exclusion."

Its main points were promoting flexible labour practices, improving job training, moving people from welfare to work and reforming taxes and regulation to help small to medium sized business.

The ministers' position appeared to go some way to ending a long-running debate grouping the United States and Britain, which favour deregulation, against countries like France, which have long put the emphasis on costly social security for workers.

However, the ministers, when asked what concrete measures were being proposed, said it was up to individual countries to decide.

Neither did the final communique make any reference to attempts by France and Italy to further regulate their labour markets by imposing a 35-hour week.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin and British Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown refused to comment on the 35-hour-week debate at a press conference.

Mr. Brown said the G-8 plan — which strongly resembled Prime Minister Tony Blair's crusade to get those on benefits back to work — showed "new thinking" and that "we are facing the same direction."

French Employment Minister Martine Aubry said: "We are no longer in a theological debate about the state and market. I think we will go forward by finding a happy medium."

"I think everybody is reaching this third way," she added.

The G-8 ministers — from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States — said their governments should adopt the programme when they hold a heads of state meeting in Birmingham in May.

They also called for "active involvement of employers and unions."

Mr. Brown described the plan as "vital, given the background of intensified global competition and technological advances we all face as the 21st century approaches.

"We all do things in our different ways, but the common agenda, I think, is there to see," he said, adding it was interesting to see "we are talking about reform of taxes and benefits, we're talking about structural reforms, about economic reforms that have to take place."

He said: "I think the challenge is to have both job creation and the maximum amount of social cohesion."

International financial institutions are pressing European Union members, excluding Britain which has low joblessness, to fight unemployment by making their labour market more flexible before the launch of the euro single currency in January.

Once locked into the single currency zone, governments will have far less margin to boost spending, cut taxes or take other fiscal measures aimed at creating jobs.

Britain — where Mr. Blair's Labour government is launching a 3.5-billion-pound ($5.6 billion) "welfare to work" programme which pays companies subsidies to employ young people and the long-term unemployed — has just five per cent without work.

In France, Germany and Spain, unemployment is soaring to more than double Britain's rate.

European Economy Commissioner Yves-Thibault de Silguy said that attempts in France and Italy to resolve joblessness by cutting the length of the work week was "not a miracle solution to the unemployment problem."

"This idea must not bring into question the profitability and competitiveness of companies," Mr. De Silguy told reporters.

He stressed the need for such measures to remain flexible, given that shorter working hours worked better in some sectors than others.

Group of Seven says Asia crisis manageable if reforms pursued

LONDON (AFP) — Group of Seven (G-7) finance chiefs said here Sunday that world economic growth can survive the Asian crisis if the affected economies undertake tough reforms to make their markets more open and transparent.

Japan, the world's second largest economy and the economic engine of Asia, came under strong pressure from its G-7 partners to reignite its damp economy, while Indonesia was told to carry out reforms demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The G-7 financial leaders also called for the IMF to work actively on a new global code of conduct to forestall any future economic collapse.

In their final statement at the end of a one-day meeting in London, the G-7 finance ministers and central bank governors called on Asian countries, whose economies have nosedived over the last few months, to stick to "the necessary reforms."

"As long as the affected Asian countries follow through with reform and the rest of the world responds appropriately, the overall effect of the Asian crisis on world growth in 1998 should be manageable," the G-7 said.

"We believe that where countries pursue the necessary reforms, the prospects of a return of confidence to global investors and a resumption of vigorous growth in the medium term are good," the G-7 said.

The G-7 — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States — said it welcomed the IMF's "emphasis on structural reforms to reduce inappropriate government interference in the market economy."

The G-7 said it backed tough IMF moves to ensure "integrity, transparency and fight corruption in order to lay the basis for economic recovery."

The lengthy final communique made no direct reference to Indonesia, but G-7 chiefs did not pull their punches in comments after the meeting, urging President Suharto to stick to the reforms required by the IMF as a condition to a $43 billion rescue package.

President Suharto should give up his plans for trying to rescue his economy by pegging the rupiah currency to the U.S. dollar, Gordon Brown, the British finance minister, told reporters.

The G-7 stated "our support for the IMF view that it is not the appropriate time for a currency board to be established" in Indonesia, Mr. Brown said. "We were of the view that the Indonesian government must implement the IMF programme."

German Finance Minister Theo Waigel told reporters that Indonesia could recover if IMF reforms are "strictly applied."

He stressed the need for the private financial sector to take part in rescue packages, saying that "perhaps we would have had more success and more rapidly if that had been done."

Japan also heard tough words from its partners.

In their closing statement, the G-7 said that the outlook was "weak" and called for "continued action to strengthen the financial system and regulatory reforms of the financial and other sectors so as to increase openness."

U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin told a press conference that Japan must act "clearly and decisively" to strengthen its financial sector and either cut taxes or boost spending, both of which were absent from a reform package unveiled Friday.

However, Finance Minister Hikaru Matsunaga told reporters that "I did not make a commitment for taking additional measures." He defended the reform package saying it had not been "appropriately valued." Meanwhile, the G-7 finance chiefs stressed they would have to work together to keep the world economy on an even keel.

They called on the IMF to put forward proposals for a code of conduct to ensure the transparency of emerging economies.

The joint statement said the G-7 looked "forward to the IMF making proposals soon for a code of conduct on transparency in fiscal policy as agreed in Hong Kong last year."

In addition, the G-7 stressed its commitment to cooperate in foreign exchange markets to avoid "excessive depreciation" of currencies.

"We emphasised that it is important to avoid excessive depreciation where this could exacerbate large external imbalances," the final statement said.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Don't be late for work this morning. Your boss is watching to make sure everybody is on time and applying themselves to their tasks. If you're not in the mood, don't let it show. This afternoon, you'll have opportunities to get together with friends. Set up something for lunch or dinner. The party could go well into the evening.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) The morning is best for adventure. If you can't think of anything exciting, ask a creative friend to help. Make sure it happens by gathering up your best friends and taking them all to an exciting place together. This does not have to be expensive, just unusual. How about a picnic on top of the tallest building in town?.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) There's an opportunity to advance in your career today. If you need money, that's the way to get it. Those numbers on the credit card bill indicate money you owe the bank, not the other way around. Actually, credit should be easy to get, maybe even easy enough to buy a house. If that's the plan, make calls first thing this morning.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Make your move early, while you have the advantage. Later on, problems get in the way of your plans. Postpone an engagement until later in the week. Travel looks excellent on Thursday and Friday. If you can talk the boss into giving you a long weekend, you can work overtime later, or even tonight. You could use the money.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) The workday is still intense, at least until around noon. Figure out what you can delegate and get rid of as much of your work as possible this afternoon. Somebody with experience in an area you know nothing about is your best choice. Hire an expert to do a job you find tedious. It'll be money well spent.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Your attitude has changed. Everything looks easier. It's almost like being in love. In fact, you might be in love. The feeling will be most intense this morning, so don't let it make you late for work. Later in the day the pace will quicken. You may still have your head in the clouds, but you'd better pay attention.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) This is a good day for cleaning house. You could get the chance to entertain company this evening; romance may be involved. If you don't already have something scheduled, maybe you'd better make a phone call. This evening will be excellent for making plans for the future. The crazier the better!.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You'll start out this week with an interesting prospect. There's more to learn before you really master it. There may be romance involved. You're either falling in love with your teacher or student, or you're learning something together. If you're not involved in a project that meets that description, think of one and do it.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) This is a good day for business. There could be money coming into your account, if you play your cards right. There's a temptation to goof off. Do you want to play or get down to business? Maybe you don't want to take on the extra responsibility. If you focus on long-term goals, it won't seem so hard. It might even be fun.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You're good at figuring things out anyway, but today you've got a bit of a tailwind. You're luckier, too, and a little more willing to try things you've never done before. Later on tonight, the moon will be going into Aquarius. After that happens, it's time to go shopping. Don't worry, you'll know.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) A friend would like for your help out of a tough situation. You wouldn't mind doing it, if you could just figure out how. This is a little out of your area of expertise. Consult with a person who knows more about finances than you do. There could be a simple solution to your rather complicated problem.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Make your move early while you have the advantage. Friends are coming from a supportive place and their coaching is just what you need. You're going into a phase when you'll be very powerful. It's important to have plans made before then. Don't waste this opportunity because you're not focused this morning.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

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Kuwait projects oil price at $12 per barrel

KUWAIT (R) — OPEC member Kuwait is projecting oil revenue in the 1998/99 (July-June) budget at $12 a barrel, $1 below previous years, Minister of Finance Nasser Al Rodhan was quoted as saying.

"Oil revenue in the fiscal year 1998/99 has been calculated according to Kuwait's new OPEC quota of 2.19 million barrels per day (bpd) and at a price of $12 a barrel," Sheikh Rodhan told Al Qabas newspaper.

"This is $1 below previous years in view of the drop in (world) oil prices," he added.

The current average price for Kuwaiti crudes is around $13 a barrel compared with a 1997 average of about $18 a barrel.

Foreign investment in Morocco triples '97

RABAT (AFP) — Morocco corralled $1.2 billion worth of foreign investment last year, against a mere $400 million in 1996, and it expects an equal or even better performance in 1998 and 1999, Moroccan Finance Minister Driss Jettou told AFP.

He said $360 million of that investment came from the privatisation of SAMIR refining company, $100 million from the acquisition of a holding in the Moroccan Foreign Trade Bank, and $263 million from payment by Asia Brown Boveri (ABB) of an initial portion of an electricity production concession.

The minister noted that Morocco now has three major sources of foreign investment: privatisations, concessions and the industrial sector.

He said that 1998 will bring privatisation of the National Postal and Telecommunications Office (ONPT) and a call for tenders for installing the country's second GSM network. The sugar sector and the National Economic Development Bank will also be privatised.

As to concessions, he said, the big projects this year will be the development of the new free port of Tangiers for a total cost of $600 million, the launching of a gas-fired power plant with the participation of France's EDF firm, and a start to several motorway sections.

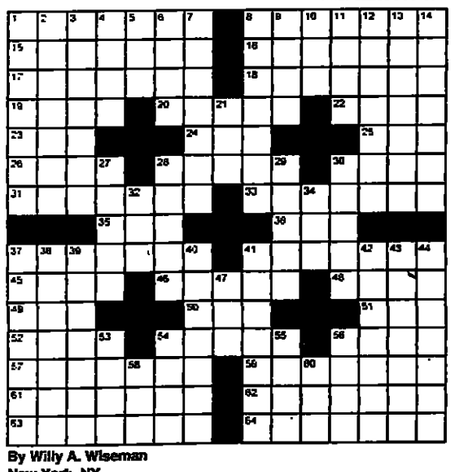
In the industrial sector, the main investments in 1998 will relate to Accor Group's purchase of two big hotel chains (Salam and Dounia-PLM) for $300 million and construction of a phosphoric acid plant with participation by Indian group Birla ($230 million) and a semiconductor plant by Thomson SGS for $360 million.

He said South Korean group Daewoo would start a cathode ray tube factory and an auto assembly plant for a total investment of $400 million.

THE Daily Crossword

Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

TMSPuzzles@aol.com



By Willy A. Wiseman
New York, NY

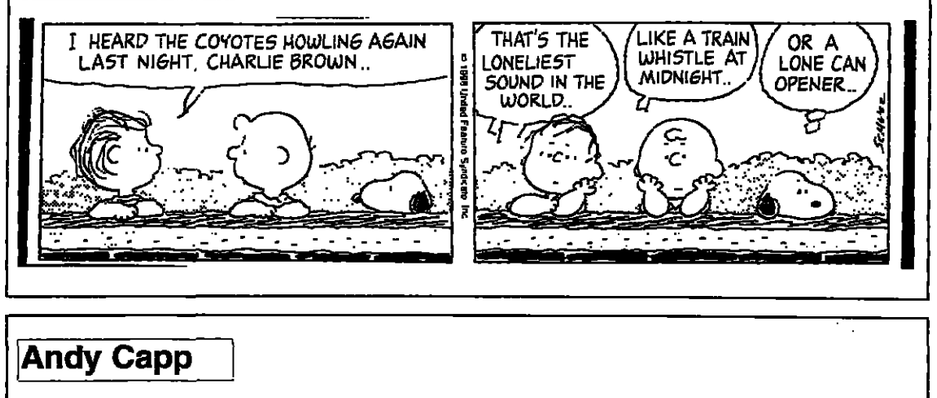
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16 Island in the Saronic Gulf
17 Midler film
18 Armored breastplate
19 Why not?
20 Domesticated
22 Westernmost Aleutian
23 Wrath
24 Relatives
25 Continental abbr.
26 Soho sidewalk's edge
28 Shows the way
30 Dirty
31 Subjected to testing
33 Put in stitches
35 Obvious toupee
36 Hearing organ
37 Too fast
41 One making inarticulate sounds
45 Mild oath
46 Entices
48 Matching
49 Cable station from Tenn.
50 Tonic's partner
51 Sack
52 Small amount
54 Disenchanted fan
56 Country way
57 Triangular hat
59 Desertlike
61 Shapeless chair
62 Chad, the actor
63 Borgnine and Hemingway
64 Legislative bodies

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1 Almond-ish
2 Is innate
3 Rocks on the edge
4 Violent conflicts
5 O.J.'s judge
6 Criterion
7 Moved under cover
8 Goes up
9 Praise
10 The Greatest
11 Actress Theda
12 Unpaid performer
13 Make flats sharps
14 Removed doubts
21 Actress Farrow
27 Exposed
28 Aboveboard
29 Litigators
30 Chances to play
32 M-m-m-m good!
34 Greek "T"
37 Beatles song or movie
38 One who chooses not to see
39 A la philosopher Immanuel
40 Sea cows
41 Very beginnings
42 Satin-and-moire striped fabric
43 Rise
44 Acting monarchs
47 "Road to __"
53 Skin problem
54 Unruly kid
55 Speak incoherently
56 "Doctor Zhivago" heroine
58 Archaic: abbr.
60 Biddy

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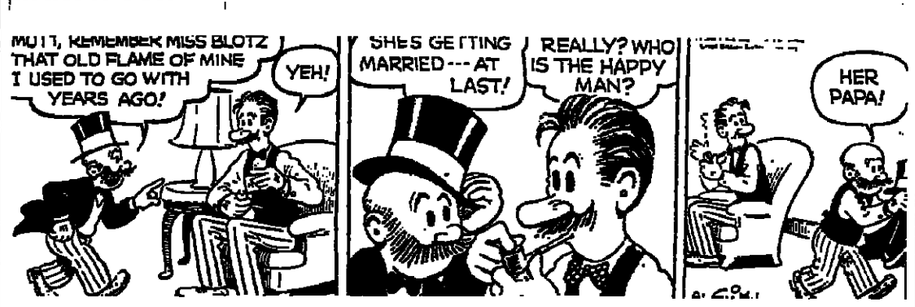
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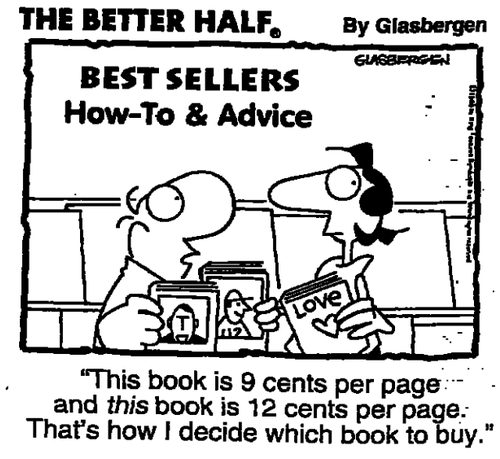


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Answer: Unplugging the kitchen sink left Dad like this — DRAINED

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Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Waked sees no obstacles, burden in higher listing fees on Jordanian firms

** MAHER AL WAKED, a member of the board of the Jordan Securities Commission, said the increase in the fees of listings at the Amman Financial Market would not cause an obstacle or be a burden on public shareholding companies. He added that the increase in fees came in response to plans to develop the stock exchange as it raises financial resources to meet the latest developments as required by the new securities law.

"The increase in listing fees was taken after a comparative study with other listing fees in Arab and international markets," Dr. Waked said. "It was fixed at no more than JD10,000 as specified in the internal regulations of the Amman Financial Market. He added that the fees can be considered as moderate if compared with neighbouring markets in terms of the absolute figure.

Confirming that the increase was not extremely high, Dr. Waked indicated that all companies have willingly paid the fees without complaining. He said the commission will evaluate the amount of the fees from time to time and that "there is no sacred or fixed formula" noting that the government has recently lowered a number of fees and taxes on public shareholding companies in addition to abolishing the capitalisation tax.

Asked about a number of companies which seek to have new listings but are passing through difficult situations, Dr. Waked said the regulations do not differentiate between one company and another as long as the Amman Financial Market provides its services to all the companies equally. "These fees do not hinder the activities of any company taking into consideration that the fees have not been changed for more than twenty years," he stressed.

The Amman Chamber of Industry has asked the chairman of the commission to exempt some companies from paying the increase due to difficult conditions they are passing through. Noting that the increase would negatively affect some companies, the chamber hoped that the decision to increase the fees would be reconsidered so as shares of Jordanian companies continue to be traded at the stock exchange.

Dr. Waked said that there is a new structure for the capital and financial markets that include setting up an Amman bourse and a depository centre to be managed by the private sector. In addition, there will be a number of new organisational projects to upgrade the performance at the Jordanian capital market and bring it in line with new developments in the world (Al Ra'i + Al Dustour).

OECD investment accord impossible without U.S.-EU Helms-Burton agreement

PARIS (AFP) — It will be impossible for industrial countries to conclude a planned investment liberalisation agreement by the April deadline if the United States and European Union (EU) do not resolve their dispute over Cuba investment by then, the OECD has said.

"Everbody is aware that there can be no MAI (multilateral investment agreement) unless there is an acceptable solution on this score," the chairman of the MAI negotiating group, Frans Engering told journalists.

But so far "there is not the breakthrough needed before we can sign up to the MAI," he said.

There are a number of other outstanding issues to be resolved before the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) can seal the agreement, but the U.S.-EU dispute has to be resolved bilaterally before the agreement can be sealed.

MAI has proved a particularly difficult issue for the 29 OECD member countries.

It was launched in May 1995, aimed at ensuring that foreign investors would be given the same investment access and protection as domestic investors in signatory countries.

But members failed to reach agreement by the May 1997 deadline, and gave themselves an extra year. Time is now running out again, with the deadline the annual OECD ministerial meeting on April 27 and 28.

The agreement has already been watered down from the original ambitious plan, and it is now virtually certain that taxation issues, for instance, will not be included, Mr Engering said.

The amounts at stake are enormous: Foreign direct investment from OECD member countries totalled some $259 billion in 1996.

The EU-U.S. dispute centres on the U.S. Helms-Burton Law which allows Washington to penalise foreign countries operating in the United States for investing in Cuba and Iran.

Failure to resolve this issue creates problems for clauses in the MAI covering conflict of jurisdiction, expropriation and retroactive legislation.

President Bill Clinton has suspended a clause in the law allowing U.S. companies to sue foreign companies using expropriated property in Cuba, but Congress has said an agreement must be reached with the EU by April on investment in expropriated property or it will press the administration for punitive action against European companies.

The Helms-Burton issue is far from being the only outstanding problem in the MAI, however. Disagreements also remain on a long list of issues, including the extent of exceptions to be allowed individual member countries, protection of intellectual property rights, treatment of indirect investment and how to avoid de facto discrimination.

Mr. Engering said that all these issues are still outstanding after a week of talks by senior officials here, and that is now up to a deputy ministerial meeting here in February to make clear the extent of political will to seal an agreement.

Business leaders who met with MAI negotiators here expressed concern that the agreement will end up being so watered down that it will represent little progress on existing relatively liberal investment access to OECD markets.

"A successful agreement would be of enormous benefit in increasing flows of foreign direct investment around the world by creating a secure and favourable investment climate," the International Chamber of Commerce said in a statement.

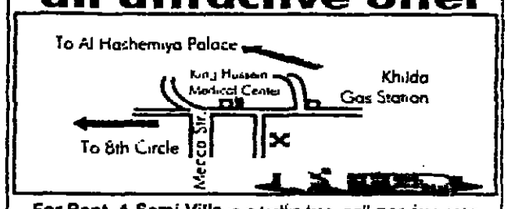
But business leaders expressed concern that "as negotiations progressed, the agreement was being watered down," noting that their support is vital to persuade national legislatures, notably the U.S. Congress, to ratify the agreement.

Business is particularly concerned that binding core labour rules not be included in the agreement, not least because this might discourage non-OECD countries from signing up.

There is also concern about the high level of exceptions being sought by some countries — France, backed by the EU, wants a "cultural exception" to protect its arts sector, for instance, which other countries fear could become a blanket excuse for excluding a wide range of investment.

Mr. Engering acknowledged that the next three months of negotiations will be very tough, but said he still believes a good agreement will be reached.

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The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates Prices as at 22/02/98 18:43

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.8200	0.6114	1.4675	127.73	1.4220	1784.53	2.0515	6.0990
DE Mark	0.5495	-	0.3357	0.8062	70.17	0.7809	985.46	1.1270	3.3506
GB Sterling	1.6355	2.9800	-	2.4011	208.86	2.3257	2934.95	3.3652	9.9749
CH Franc	0.6814	123.94	0.4162	-	87.01	0.9683	1222.02	139.71	4.1532
JP Yen	0.0078	1.4241	0.4783	1.1483	-	1.1127	14.04	160.52	4.7723
CA Dollar	0.7032	1.2581	0.4226	1.0123	1.11	-	1241.24	1.4181	4.2164
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0139	0.3405	0.0818	1406.67	0.7922	-	11.43	3.3977
NL Guilder	0.4874	88.69	0.2979	71.53	62.22	0.6930	874.63	-	2.9722
FR Franc	0.1640	0.2983	0.1002	24.0534	20.92	0.2331	33.63	33.6300	-

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7505	0.3770	3.6408	0.3057	3.6728	1528.00	3.4000
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2898	0.5317	5.1351	0.4312	5.1803	2155.15	4.7955
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1890	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0815	0.98	407.41	0.9065
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8807	9.9485	-	9.56	0.8108	9.74	4053.16	9.0188
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1947	1.0301	1.0301	-	0.0840	1.01	419.69	0.9339
Kuwait Dinar	3.2712	2.3193	12.2686	1.2332	11.91	-	12.01	4998.36	9.9339
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0212	0.1026	0.9913	0.0832	-	416.03	0.9257
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4640	2.4545	0.2467	2.3827	0.2001	2.4037	-	2.2251
Egyptian	0.2941	0.2085	1.1031	0.1109	1.0708	0.0899	1.0802	449.41	-

Energy

Oils	Last	Previous
Brent	13.89	13.97
W. Texas	16.09	16.08
Bonny	13.89	13.97
Dubai	12.39	12.47
UL Gas	160.00	161.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4855	0.16303	0.39154	34.075
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.49581	0.16648	0.39982	34.7959
KW Dinar	3.2712	5.95593	2	4.80307	418.06
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.83092	1.6218	3.8956	338.983
CY Pound	1.8709	3.405	1.1436	2.7455	238.97

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	287	297.5
Silver (oz's)	6.54	6.59
Platinum (oz's)	379.2	381.2
AL (3 Months)	#N/A DRF	#N/A DRF
CU (3 Months)	#N/A DRF	#N/A DRF
Zinc (3 Months)	#N/A DRF	#N/A DRF
Lead (3 Months)	#N/A DRF	#N/A DRF
NI (3 Months)	#N/A DRF	#N/A DRF

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)

Period / C'ncy	-1- Month	-3- Months	-6- Months	-9- Months	-1- Year
USD	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.53	5.53
GBP	7.41	7.43	7.43	7.31	7.25
JPY	0.44	0.43	0.50	0.53	0.47
DEM	3.73	3.41	3.47	3.56	3.82
FRF	3.72	4.05	3.52	3.60	3.67
CHF	0.71	0.77	0.93	0.97	1.30
ITL	5.11	5.95	5.59	5.25	5.02

Energy

Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	178.5	Spot
Cocoa ($/ton)	1563	Spot
Sugar ($/ton)	276.8	Spot
Wheat ($/ton)	0	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	26.75	Spot
Tea (stg/kg)	198	Spot
Barley ($/bsh)	0	Spot
Rice ($/ton)	400	Spot

*** JOD Cross Rates**

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.167	1.1628
DE Mark	0.3885	0.3904
CH Franc	0.4818	0.4842
FR Franc	0.1159	0.1165
JP Yen	0.5534	0.5562
NL Guilder	0.3448	0.3465
IT Lira	0.394	0.396

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET
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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 22/02/1998

	PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
	346.000	250.000	ARAB BANK	15.2	1.21	15	420	138920	331.00	330.00	1.00-
	2.340	1.680	JOR.NATIONAL BK.	E	0.00	19	7723	13827	1.77	1.80	.03+
#S	5.800	3.290	CAIRO AMMAN BANK	6.7	4.62	1	1000	3250	3.29	3.25	.04-
S	3.540	1.370	BANK OF JORDAN	4.3	0.00	3	1450	1987	1.39	1.37	.02-
S	2.680	1.650	INDUSTRIAL DEV.BK.	10.1	6.18	8	9650	16309	1.69	1.69	-
S	4.180	1.850	JOR.KUWAIT BANK	10.1	0.00	2	155	295	1.90	1.90	-
	.920	.620	JOR.GULF BANK	4.2	9.86	3	10500	7755	.72	.71	.01-
S	4.020	1.950	JOR.ISLAMIC BANK	10.7	4.57	8	2700	5670	2.11	2.10	.01-
#N	2.350	1.700	JOR.INV.FIN.BANK/NEW	E	0.00	4	725	1171	1.70	1.61	.09-
	BANK SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 231.16 %CHG: -0.22			63	34323	189183			
	2.210	1.590	JOR FRENCH INSUR.	5.9	7.14	5	12350	25935	2.10	2.10	-
	2.350	1.800	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	8.1	4.78	1	600	1140	1.86	1.90	.04+
	INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 121.10 %CHG: +0.19			6	12950	27075			
	2.050	1.550	JOR.ELECTRIC PWR.	9.7	4.98	16	7350	14728	2.00	2.01	.01+
!	3.800	2.450	HIMEN MINERALS	20.2	3.91	1	100	399	3.80	3.99	.19+
S	7.500	3.750	VHCLS. OWNERS FED.	8.5	4.50	1	100	389	4.09	3.89	.20-
*	3.050	2.200	SHIPPING LINES	12.2	6.19	1	2000	4200	2.20	2.10	.10-
	1.550	.930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	g	0.00	3	1000	1003	1.01	1.00	.01-
	.610	.410	JORDAN INTL.TRAD.	22.6	0.00	1	50	22	.46	.44	.02-
	4.000	2.890	ARAB INTL.INV.EDUC.	10.3	0.00	1	1000	3950	3.95	3.95	-
	1.090	.900	ZARKA EDUCATION	g	0.00	5	2000	1860	.93	.93	-
	1.930	1.630	UNIFIED CO.	8.1	6.43	9	2800	4788	1.70	1.71	.01+
	SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 116.58 %CHG: -0.30			38	16400	31338			
	4.450	2.690	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	18.5	4.00	8	24900	68476	2.74	2.75	.01+
	4.140	3.050	JOR.PHOSPHATE MINES	9.6	2.90	1	2000	6900	3.48	3.45	.03-
	7.050	5.620	ARAB POTASH CO.	14.6	3.14	6	3900	23600	5.85	6.10	.25+
	11.160	9.200	JOR. PETROL.REFINARY	9.8	8.77	11	5660	57448	10.18	10.14	.04-
	4.840	3.440	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	12.9	4.27	68	21293	99415	4.74	4.68	.06-
#S	7.200	4.420	JOR.CERAMIC IND.	4.7	4.42	2	2000	4520	2.38	2.26	.12-
S	1.420	.780	RAFIA INDUSTRIES	g	0.00	6	1225	981	.78	.82	.04+
	6.000	4.400	DAR ALDAWA DV.INV.	14.2	4.31	3	1200	6927	5.77	5.80	.03+
	3.600	2.220	ARAB ALUM.IND.	5.6	10.42	7	2300	5500	2.40	2.40	-
	.610	.400	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.1	0.00	9	3600	1548	.43	.43	-
S	3.690	1.880	GENERAL INVESTMENT	10.2	2.95	3	1074	2683	2.59	2.47	.12-
	1.190	.680	ARAB PAPER CONV.TRD.	22.9	0.00	2	500	373	.78	.75	.03-
S	3.000	.920	NATL.CABLE WIRE.MFAC	24.6	0.00	23	9950	10233	1.06	1.02	.04-
	.790	.530	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM	g	0.00	5	2100	1197	.57	.57	-
	1.570	1.150	ARAB PHARM.CHEM.	15.6	5.74	5	1000	1220	1.23	1.22	.01-
S	1.760	.810	UNIV. MODN.INDS.	P	.26	30	33200	28022	.86	.84	.02-
	1.410	.690	JOR.INDS.RESOURCES	10.0	13.51	2	400	294	.74	.74	-
	.930	.810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.5	0.00	2	850	765	.90	.90	-
	1.880	1.290	EL -ZAY READY WEAR	47.2	0.00	9	3100	4172	1.35	1.34	.01-
	1.200	.880	UNION CH. & VEG.	45.5	0.00	9	9100	9190	1.01	1.00	.01-
	.810	.660	JORDAN STEEL	31.2	7.25	1	250	173	.69	.69	-
	.840	.570	MID.EAST COMPLEX	7.6	16.13	8	4500	2746	.62	.62	-
	INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 111.57 %CHG: +1.62			220	134102	336380			
	GRAND TOTAL		INDEX: 166.56 %CHG: +0.41			327	197775	583976			

PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 22/02/1998

	.540	.340	JOR.TRADE FAC.	10.1	0.00	20	72900	26978	.38	.38	-
	.800	.660	UNION INV. 50%	g	0.00	18	65544	14333	.71	.72	.01+
	.620	.360	ARAB FIN.INVEST.	g	0.00	9	10200	4461	.44	.44	-
S	36.000	1.050	JOR TOURIST TRANS.CO	3.9	2.50	1	100	110	1.05	1.10	.05+
	.780	.610	AL-DAWLIYAH 75%	65.3	0.00	5	307	231	.68	.68	-
	.290	.140	JOR.INDS.MATCH-JEMCO	g	0.00	1	1000	160	.16	.16	-
	.640	.370	ARAB FOOD & MED.	g	0.00	2	1200	480	.40	.40	-
	.480	.240	ARAB INTL.INV.TRD.	27.6	0.00	7	14500	3482	.25	.24	.01-
	.550	.280	NATL. TEXTILE	g	0.00	3	750	213	.28	.29	.01+
	.750	.360	NATL.MULT.ENG.MAKICO	g	0.00	26	33250	12638	.39	.39	-
N	1.230	.890	READY MIX CONCRETE	13.8	0.00	2	1000	1140	1.09	1.14	.05+
	.630	.310	NAYZAK DIES & MOULDS	g	0.00	1	250	83	.31	.33	.02+
	.670	.580	MIDEAST PHARM. 90%	E	0.00	3	158000	80580	.61	.61	-
	1.500	.860	UNION TOBACCO 75%	g	0.00	3	488	550	1.38	1.38	-
	.730	.550	RAZI PHARM.	E	0.00	4	3150	2206	.70	.70	-
	.460	.240	INDS. ENG.	g	0.00	5	8800	2277	.25	.26	.01+
	.830	.510	INDS. CERAMIC	13.9	0.00	1	250	133	.51	.53	.02+
N	.950	.550	ADVANCED PHARMA.IND.	E	0.00	29	27366	17540	.65	.64	.01-
	.820	.490	NATL. POULTRY	E	0.00	3	750	398	.52	.53	.01+
#N	.950	.480	OPTICALG HEARING 75%	E	0.00	3	6300	1389	.48	.47	.01-
N	1.000	.660	NAT.ALUMINIUM. 75%	94.6	0.00	5	3700	1591	.67	.68	.01+
	1.100	.720	ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	48.2	0.00	5	5327	5323	1.00	1.00	-
N	1.310	1.000	NUTRIDAR	E	0.00	17	8650	9851	1.13	1.13	-
	GRAND TOTAL					173	423782	186043			

Second biggest Islamic bank reports higher 1997 profits

DUBAI (AFP) — The world's second biggest Islamic bank has reported an increase of around 12 per cent in net profits in 1997 due to an upturn in investment and other operations.

Net profits by the Dubai Islamic Bank (DIB) stood at 63 million dirhams ($17.16 million) in 1997 compared with 56.3 million dirhams ($15.34 million) in 1996, the bank's balance sheet showed.

Operating income grew by five per cent to to 505 million dirhams ($137.6 million) from 481 million dirhams ($131 million), according to the balance sheet, which is to be endorsed by DIB's general assembly. It showed a growth of around 19 per cent in assets to 8.4 billion dirhams ($2.28 billion) from 7.1 billion dirhams ($1.93 billion).

Customers deposits also jumped by nearly 18 per cent to 7.57 billion dirhams ($2.06 billion) from 6.37 billion dirhams ($1.73 billion).

The report showed most of the profits came from internal and foreign investments as well as Murabaha, which involves trading in real estate, cars, equipment and other materials in line with Islamic law.

DIB, owned by private investors, was the top Islamic bank in the world before Abu Dhabi approved last year the creation of the biggest bank of its kind with a paid-up capital of one billion dirhams ($272.4 million).

DIB's capital stood at 497 million dirhams ($135.4 million) at the end of 1997 following a series of increases by the shareholders.

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West Asian basketball qualifiers start today

Riyadi play Iranian champions, Jazireh meet Yemen's Mina'

By Aleen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The 1st West Asian Zone basketball qualifiers open here Monday with top five teams vying for the sole qualifying berth to the Asian Clubs Championship which will be held in Malaysia April 25-May 2.

Al Jazireh Aramex, the Kingdom's reigning champions will be hosting the Feb. 23-27 event which groups Lebanon's Al Riyadi, Syria's Al Wihdeh, Yemen's Al Mina', Iran's Zobohan and Jordan's Al Jazireh. Palestine's Al Quds recently declined.

The tournament comes amid Al Jazireh's preparations to retain the Kingdom's basketball crown which they won last year ending a 30-year domination by rivals Orthodoxi and Al Ahli.

Four referees from the Asian Basketball Confederation (ABC) will be on hand for the tourney which will be televised live on JTV and Future TV of Lebanon.

Aramex has undertaken the cost of accommodation for the teams and will be the sole sponsor at an estimated cost of at JD20,000.

According to the ABC West Asia Zone coordinator Awwad Haddad, the Asian Clubs Championship will include 10 titleholding Asian teams: The top four from the last championship, one each from the ABC's five zones, and the host nation.

The ABC five zones are: Middle Asia, East Asia, South East Asia, West Asia and the Gulf.

Al Riyadi will probably be the strongest contender in the qualifiers, having three professionals in their lineups. The Iranian team also boasts two Yugoslav pros and the Syrian team includes veteran national team players including Anwar Abdul Hay, and Tarif Qutrash.

Al Jazireh had a training camp in Cairo, losing two while winning another two matches against Egyptian and Saudi teams. Their lineup has been boosted by the experinece of Al Ahli's veteran playmaker Samir Murqus who has opted to return to the game and signed with Al Jazireh after a two-season retirment.

"He has fit in with the team, he is playing well," Jazireh's coach Fadi Sabbah told the Jordan Times.

"Iran and Lebanon might be the favourites. We have to concentrate and give it all we got to stand a competitve chance."

Asked about the possibility of including professional players on Al Jazireh's team, chief of the organising committee Fadi Ghandour was adamant to note that he wanted no change on his lineup which will soon compete for the Kingdom's title.

"We have confidence in our team, and our plans are long term. We do not work for a particular championship only."

He however added that he did not oppose the idea of non-Jordanian players in the league as "that would benefit the overall standard of the game in the Kingdom."

In 1997 alone, Aramex spent JD80,000 to sponsor Al Jazireh's basketball teams. This year, the team will travel to Malaysia if they win the qualifiers. The agenda also includes the Arab Clubs Championships in Beirut March 23-April 2.

Ghandour said holding the qualifiers in Amman were part of celebrations marking Aramex's 15 years of operation.

"The tournament will be open to the Jordanian public free of charge. This is our gift for Jordanian basketball fans as it is not often that we host events grouping Arab champion teams."

Al Jazireh Club Chairman Abdullah Kiswani underlined his appreciation for Aramex adding that the team would not have been crowned the Kingdom's champions had it not been for the serious support and over JD700,000 in sponsorship from its generous sponsor.

"Aramex have sponsored us for the last 10 years. They are an example worth following and we cannot begin to express our appreciation."

Al Jazireh's lineup includes five national team players including Husam Lutfi, Ma'an Odeh and Naser Alawneh who might miss the first match because of injury.

Al Orthodoxi and Al Ahli had previously taken part in the Asian Clubs championship with Al Ahli securing the best Jordanian showing with a fourth place finish in 1995.

Al Jazireh won the Kingdom's basketball crown in 1997 leaving traditional rivals Al Ahli in second place and Al Orthodoxi third.

Al Orthodoxi had an undisputed reign from 1976- 1989. Al Ahli won the title in 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1994 while Al Orthodoxi came back to win in 1995 and 1996 and are currently preparing to get back the title.

Novotna, Schnyder cruise through to Hanover final

HANOVER (AFP) — Czech top seed Jana Novotna will face Switzerland's Patty Schnyder in the final of the $450,000 WTA event here after both cruised through their semi-finals on Saturday.

Novotna had too much guile for 16-year-old Russian Anna Kournikova, winning 6-3, 6-3 and unseeded Schnyder beat Sabine Appelmans of Belgium by the same score.

Novotna, 29, said she had been surprised how at Florida-based Kournikova's aggressive tactics.

"She surprised me a bit by coming to the net so often," said the Czech.

Kournikova's approach failed to pay off, however, and after Novotna opened out a 3-0 lead in the first set she was seldom threatened, winning the match on her first match point.

Schnyder, ranked 25, made equally light work of Appelmans, who had beaten Steffi Graf in the quarter-finals.



Detroit Pistons Don Reid takes the ball to the net past Dallas Mavericks Shawn Bradley in the first half of play February 21. The Pistons held the Mavericks in the first half with 42 per cent of shots made (Reuters photo)

Bulls win; Jazz beat Spurs

WASHINGTON (AP) — Scottie Pippen had 23 points and Michael Jordan had 19 points on 8-for-23 as the Chicago Bulls beat the Washington Wizards 94-88 Saturday night.

President Bill Clinton was in the stands as the Wizards lost their fourth straight. It was Washington's sixth straight game without starting forwards Chris Webber and Juwan Howard.

Toni Kukoc had 17 points for Chicago. Calbert Cheaney had a dozen of his career-high 30 points in the first quarter for the Wizards.

• **Philadelphia 76ers 98, New Jersey Nets 89:** At East Rutherford, New Jersey, Allen Iverson had 27 points and 12 assists to lead the Philadelphia 76ers to a rare road victory.

The Nets, who lost their third straight, announced that recently acquired centre Rony Seikaly had an MRI and will miss four weeks with a bone contusion in his right foot.

Derrick Coleman scored 10 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter as the Sixers won for only the sixth time in 25 road games.

Kerry Kittles led new jersey with 24 points, Sam Cassell scored 22 and Jayson Williams grabbed 24 rebounds.

• **Detroit Pistons 94, Dallas Mavericks 82:** At Dallas, Brian Williams scored 19 points, Joe Dumars had 18 and the Detroit Pistons got just five points from Grant Hill but beat Dallas anyway.

Hill, averaging 21.3 points per game, made just 2 of 11 field goal attempts in 39 minutes. He had his streak of scoring in double figures stopped at 41.

Williams added nine rebounds as the Pistons snapped a four-game losing streak.

Erick Strickland had 19 points and Hubert Davis 15 for the Mavericks, who have lost four straight and eight of nine.

• **Utah Jazz 79, San Antonio Spurs 77:** At San Antonio, Monty Williams couldn't get the tying shot off after rookie Tim Duncan missed a chance to tie from the foul line as the Utah Jazz hung on for its seventh straight victory.

Karl Malone had 24 points and 13 rebounds as the Jazz increased their Midwest Division lead over the Spurs to 1 1/2 games.

The Spurs played the third straight game without David Robinson, who is out with a sore right knee.

Duncan had 29 points to lead the Spurs in scoring for the sixth straight game. He also grabbed 15 rebounds and blocked three shots.

• **Charlotte Hornets 111, Los Angeles Clippers 98:** At Los Angeles, Anthony Mason scored 25 points and helped Charlotte overcome a 19-point deficit and end a three-game losing streak.

Glen Rice had 23 points and David Wesley 21 for the Hornets, who handed the Clippers their sixth straight loss and 18th in 20 tries.

Rookie Maurice Taylor led the Clippers with 17 points. Isaac Austin, playing his first game for Los Angeles since being traded from Miami, had 16 points and 10 rebounds in 29 minutes off the bench.

Triumph of the underdogs at African Nations Cup

OUAGADOUGOU (AFP) — Outsiders Burkina Faso and Democratic Republic of Congo reached the semi-finals of the African Nations Cup as the underdog triumphed this weekend.

Burkina Faso beat World Cup finalists Tunisia 8-7 on penalties following a 1-1 scoreline after extra-time in Ouagadougou on Saturday, and DR Congo beat Cameroon, who have also qualified for France '98, 1-0 on Friday.

Burkina Faso now face Egypt, who beat Ivory Coast 5-4 on penalties following a 0-0 draw Saturday night, in the semi-final in Bobo-Dioulasso on Wednesday (2000 GMT).

DR Congo meet the winners of Sunday's last quarter-final between Morocco and South Africa (1600 GMT), in Wednesday's first semi-final at Ouagadougou's 4th August stadium (1600 GMT).

Nine-man DR Congo knocked World Cup finalists Cameroon out of the tournament when Congo striker Mbuilua Tondelua headed home in the first half in a match where defenders Esele Bakasu and Mundaba Kisombe were sent off after the break for second bookable offences.

Congo's preparations for these finals were chaotic to say the least, but coach Pierre Kalala's side still had enough to oust Cameroon from the competition.

Roger Milla, Cameroon's World Cup hero in Italy in 1990, was in tears at the Omnisport stadium and African Confederation (CAF) president Issa Hayatou of Cameroon was also present to witness their team's downfall.

But the fairytale run of hosts Burkina Faso continued as they beat the fancied Tunisians.

The dramatic quarter-final had finished 1-1 after extra time before a capacity 45,000 crowd at the August 4 Stadium with Tunisian Hassan Gabsi levelling in the final minute of normal time. Kassoum Ouedraogo had put the Burkinabe Stallions ahead on the stroke of half-time by converting a penalty kick after goalkeeper Ali Boumnijel fouled Seydou Traore.

Burkina Faso, ranked only 27th in Africa when the tournament kicked-off two weeks ago, lost their opening match against Cameroon only to reach the last eight with controversial victories over Algeria and Guinea.

Tunisia, runners-up to hosts South Africa in the previous edition of the biennial competition, struggled throughout the game.

Burkina's coach Philippe Troussier, who takes over the reins of South African on March 1, said: "This is a great moment. Words fail to express what I feel and we are beginning to write a new phase in Burkina Faso football history."

Egypt earned their right to play Burkina after converting their mandatory five penalties while Ibrahima Diomande missed the third Ivorian kick, costing his side the match.

Egypt came closest to scoring in normal time when defender Samir Kamouna struck a free-kick against the crossbar with goalkeeper Alain Gouamene well beaten midway through the second half.

United surge nine points clear

LONDON (AFP) — Manchester United powered nine points clear at the top of the English Premiership after a 2-0 win over Derby at Old Trafford as title rivals Chelsea and Blackburn slumped to defeats on Saturday.

Chelsea's new manager Gianluca Vialli tasted defeat in his first league match in charge — a 2-0 loss at Leicester — while Blackburn were thrashed 3-0 at Southampton.

With Liverpool not playing Merseyside rivals Everton until Monday, injury-hit Arsenal were United's only realistic title contenders to maintain their challenge, courtesy of a 1-0 over London rivals Crystal Palace.

But United's joy at opening up an ominous lead at the top was tempered by the news of more injuries to key players.

Welsh winger, Ryan Giggs, scorer of United's first goal, pulled a hamstring and will be out of action for two weeks while United manager revealed that midfielder Paul Scholes has suffered a knee injury in training.

They join Norwegians Ronny Johnsen (calf) and Ole Gunner Solskjaer (virus) on a mounting injury list — and Ferguson is worried.

"Giggs has been in great foMeanwhile, Chelsea player/coach Vialli admitted that Chelsea — sunk by two goals from Emile Heskey — had paid the penalty for an error-strewn opening 20 minutes.

"We were too sloppy in that initial period and made too many mistakes. It was that period which cost us the game," said the Italian striker, who inspired Chelsea to a League Cup semi-final triumph over Arsenal in his first match in charge in midweek.

"But I've got no excuses about Wednesday's game in the sense of the players being mentally and physically tired.

"I asked the players yesterday if they were up to this no one said they were feeling tired."

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger saluted his makeshift team after a 1-0 winover Palace which lifted the Gunners into second.

With 13 players — including at least nine first choices — on the injury list Wenger admitted: "If I had been offered a 1-0 win before the start today I would have taken it with both hands.

"We had virtually a whole team missing and had to field a side with seven players between the ages of 18 and 21. We even had to take Jamie Day out of training with the youth team today to complete the substitutes bench."

Blackburn manager Roy Hodgson watched his side fall 11 points behind leaders Manchester United with a 3-0 defeat at Southampton and conceded that the 1995 champions now need "a miracle to overtake them."

Blackburn slipped to fifth in the League and had their championship odds lengthened from 12-1 to 20-1 as they became the latest of the title contenders to lose to Saints.

Tottenham boss Christian Gross remained defiant after his relegation-haunted side slipped to another defeat — 1-0 at Sheffield Wednesday.

Gross admitted his side had come for a point but remained adamant his team would not pay the ultimate Premiership price.

Coventry logged their fourth successive league win, although it took a Dion Dublin penalty a minute from time to kill off basement club Barnsley while Bolton moved up one place to third from bottom after a 1-1 draw at home to West Ham.

The Hammers had bothead Welsh striker John Hartson sent off for violent conduct after 56 minutes but took the lead through Trevor Sinclair before Nathan Blake grabbed an 86th-minute equaliser.

Aston Villa maverick Savo Milosevic was on target after 41 minutes at Wimbledon but failed to prevent a 2-1 defeat for Brian Little's struggling Midlanders.

Jason Euell shot the Dons ahead after 10 minutes and Carl Leaburn added the second two minutes before Milosevic hit back.

Rosset, Rusedski in final

ANTWERP (AFP) — Defending champion Marc Rosset of Switzerland will play Britain's big-serving Greg Rusedski in the final of the $1 million European Community Championship on Sunday after defeating Patrick Rafter of Australia 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/2).

Rusedski defeated Slovakian Karol Kucera 6-4, 6-3 in the other semi-final.

Rosset was helped on his way when Rafter suffered a groin injury and needed treatment off court before the start of the second set.

"The left groin went on me on the second point of first tiebreaker," said the Aussie.

"It felt like a pinch and then I felt it catch when moving laterally. The trainer gave me a leg support and it eased up after a while."

The fifth-seeded Rusedski, a finalist in Split a fortnight ago, started cautiously but eventually ran out an easy winner against Kucera completing his victory with an ace.

He won the set after 31 minutes when Kucera sliced a backhand return wide, saved a pair of break points in the first game of the second, and never looked back after surging 3-1 clear.

"I raised my game and made him work harder," claimed Rusedski.

"He came in on good form, after all he's beaten Sampras and Korda this year. I was pleased that I fought through. I competed well, but I felt I struck the ball better on Friday.

"I used the right tactics and I am playing the big points better and better. I just tried to mix it up and play my game."

Top teams find the going tough

PARIS (AFP) — Top teams Marseille, Metz and Monaco all failed to win their league matches at the weekend, and with Paris St. Germain coming away with a 0-0 draw from Guingamp — Lens moved up into fourth place in the standings after scoring a 1-0 win at Bordeaux.

Marseille, beaten in a five-goal thriller at home by Auxerre in the French Lague Cup quarter-finals in midweek, slipped for a second time in front of their fans on Saturday when they crashed to a shock 1-0 defeat against Rennes — Stephane Gregoire scoring the only goal of the match on the hour.

It was Rennes' first win away from home all season.

Despite the defeat Marseille stay top alongside Metz, who were also beaten in the League Cup in midweek by Paris St Germain, on 50 points from 27 matches.

Metz, hoping to put the cup defeat behind them, were disappointed. They went down 2-1 at Le Havre where Oumar Sane (19) and Vikash Dhorasoo (45) gave the home side the perfect start before Vladan Lukic pulled one back for the visitors in the 63rd minute.

Twenty four hours before the latest Marseille and Metz setbacks, Bastia, with seven of their first choice players missing from their lineup because of either injury or suspension, plundered maximum points with a 1-0 home win over champions Monaco.

Monaco were sunk thanks to an opportunist goal from second-half substitute Wilfrid Gohel who lobbed French international goalkeeper Fabien Barthez and his defenders on the hour with a left-footed effort.

Lens came away from Bordeaux with maximum points after a goal from Anton Drobnjak in the 62nd minute earned them a 1-0 victory.

But Paris St. Germain, their Brazilian coach Ricardo still under fire after a series of disappointing results despite the midweek League Cup success, were held 0-0 at Guingamp.

In Saturday's other matches Toulouse beat Nantes 1-0 away, while Auxerre and Cannes, and Montpellier and Lyon, shared 1-1 draws.

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Members of the United States team hold a poster in the closing ceremony of XIII Winter Olympic games February 22. The next Winter Games will be held in Salt Lake City in United State in 2002 (Reuters photo)

Sayonara Nagano, howdy Salt Lake City 2002

NAGANO (AFP) — Japan, its people beaming with collective pride after staging a hugely successful Winter Games and watching their athletes collect a record five gold medals, bid sayonara to the Olympics on Sunday.

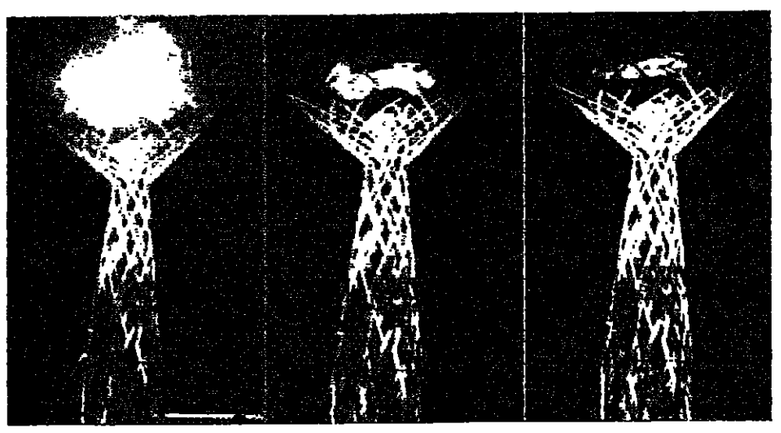
The renowned reserve of the Japanese gave way to uninhibited singing and dancing as the curtain came down on 16 days of competition when 2,450 winter athletes from 72 countries strived on snow and ice for 68 gold medals. More than 1.2 million spectators flocked to the events.

As the Olympic flame flickered and died, thousands of athletes, spectators, musicians and volunteers formed a circle at the Minami Nagano Sports Park and jived to the sound of Japanese pop group Agharta.

Tiny Tara Lipinski, America's figure skating gold medallist, sat on the shoulders of a teammate and Chinese freestyle skier Xu Nannan showed off her silver medal.

The closing ceremony for the 18th Winter Olympics, hosted by comedian Kin'ichi Hagimoto in a circus ringmaster's top hat and tails, contrasted hugely to the stuffy opening event.

Anxiety of the organisers over the gigantic logistical task of hosting the Games throughout this mountainous region was replaced by satisfaction at a Japanese sporting success story to ease the current economic pain and the athletes let their hair down with the pressure of competition behind them.



Combo picture shows the Olympic extinguished during the closing ceremonies of the XVIII Winter Olympics at the Minami Park in Nagano, Japan February 22. The U.S Salt Lake City will host the winter games in the year 2002 (Reuters photo)

Apart from the fickle weather which caused disruption to the glamour Alpine skiing events and some traffic snarl-ups brought about by huge numbers of spectators heading to the ski jump venue, the Games went like clockwork.

International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Juan Antonio Samaranch, who declined to bestow on the trouble-plagued 1996 Atlanta Olympics the normal accolade of the "best games ever", commended Nagano for organising a magnificent Olympics.

"Congratulations Nagano. Congratulations Japan. You presented to the world the best organisation in the history of the Olympic Winter Games," he said to roars of approval from the crowd. "Arigato Nagano. Sayonara Nippon."

After the athletes made their way into the stadium, which lies in the shadow of the Japanese Alps where the majority of the Olympic events were staged, bonfires burst into flame to open the "Our Hometown" presentation.

Spectators were given a glimpse of traditional festivals of Nagano Prefecture as local people praised the athletes for their efforts during the Olympics.

More than 150 drummers added their musical appreciation to the competitors and as the sound reached a deafening crescendo a lion dance, with its traditional good luck message, took centre stage.

The people of Nagano having said sayonara to the Games there was a cheery "howdy" from 2002 venue, Salt Lake City in the United States.

With the Olympic flag ceremoniously passed from Tasuku Tsukada, Mayor of Nagano City, to Samaranch and on to Mayor of Salt Lake City, Deedee Corradini, a wild west scene was recreated in the arena.

Horseback riders and a frontier stage coach dashed into the stadium as a group of children from Utah appeared on the giant screen shouting "See You in 2002."

Following a hand-held display of firecrackers, the night sky was illuminated for 11 breathtaking minutes with 5,000 fireworks symbolising the four seasons - cherry blossoms for spring, sunflowers for summer, chrysanthemums for autumn and snow for winter.

Fittingly, the final firework to erupt over the stadium was a snowflower, the emblem of the Nagano Games.

Then the party began. As Agharta performed the theme song for the Nagano Games, Let's Make A Circle and Dance, athletes linked arms with spectators and volunteers to boggie the night away.

The Japanese crowd, including Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, focused on their gold medal heroes and heroines. There were more tears from emotional ski jumper Masahiko Harada who banished the ghost of Lillehammer with his victory in the team event alongside Takanobu Okabe, Hiroya Saito and large hill winner Kazuyoshi Funaki.

Tae Satoya, who carried a picture of her dead father and coach when winning the freestyle skiing moguls, beamed with pride and Hiroyasu Shimizu, dubbed the "Bullet Train" after his win in the 500 metres speed skating competition, smilingly acknowledged the roars of approval from the spectators.

In the end there was a new beginning for the Olympic movement, after the travails of the Atlanta Games, and Japanese sport.



Men's 5,000-metre and 10,000-metre speed skating gold medallist Gianni Romme (L) of the Netherlands and 10,000 metre speed skating silver medallist Bob DeJong enjoy the fireworks with other teammates at the end of Nagano Olympic Winter Games' closing ceremony February 22 (Reuters photo)

Final Nagano medals table

	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Germany	12	9	8	29
Norway	10	10	5	25
Russia	9	6	3	18
Canada	6	5	4	15
United States	6	3	4	13
Netherlands	5	4	2	11
Japan	5	1	4	10
Austria	3	5	9	17
South Korea	3	1	2	6
Italy	2	6	2	10
Finland	2	4	6	12
Switzerland	2	2	3	7
France	2	1	5	8
Czech Republic	1	1	1	3
Bulgaria	1	0	0	1
China	0	6	2	8
Sweden	0	2	1	3
Denmark	0	1	0	1
Ukraine	0	1	0	1
Belarus	0	0	2	2
Kazakhstan	0	0	2	2
Australia	0	0	1	1
Belgium	0	0	1	1
Great Britain	0	0	1	1
Total	69	68	68	205

(Two golds and no silver awarded in two-man bobsleigh. Two bronzes awarded in four-man bob. Two silvers and no bronze awarded in the men's Super G)

And the winner is ... not you

NAGANO (AFP) — All this way to lose

After such a long trip it was finally much ado about nothing as the most-vaunted stars plummeted to Earth, their egos severely bruised after their medal mission to planet Nagano backfired.

And the old adage "the bigger they are the harder they fall" was never better illustrated than at the 18th Winter Games as many of the greatest names were cut down to size.

It seemed the biggest losers of all, the Canadian and U.S. men's ice hockey teams, had caught a bout of indigestion after swallowing too much hype about how they would crush everything in their respective paths.

In the event, having threatened in time-honoured North American tradition to kick the opposition's posteriors, they both embarrassingly went the way of Italian ski legend Alberto Tomba, who also finished on his rump while bidding for a fourth gold in four successive Olympics.

To add insult to their very public injury, the multi-millionaire U.S. hockey squad returned home with their tails between their legs after returning their hosts' hospitality by trashing their rooms.

So much for those who perhaps didn't deserve any success.

But other losers at these Games could legitimately feel hard done by.

A case in point was world champion figure skater Elvis Stojko, struck down by the Olympic jinx.

The Canadian pulled up in agony with a torn groin muscle as soon as his programme finished after gritting his teeth long enough to grab a silver.

Stojko's failure to win made it the fourth Olympics in a row the defending world champion had lost out at an Olympics — and each time the loser has been Canadian.

U.S. skater Todd Eldredge was also unlucky as he missed the podium by one place having fallen near the end of his programme.

Both will live to fight another day after still giving pleasure to many.

And so too will Chinese short track skaters, who also merit inclusion in the losers' club.

Sports fans in the world's most populous country have waited on the edge of their seats for a Chinese gold medal since their debut at the Lake Placid Games in 1980.

And they should have broken their duck here. But instead their five silvers and a bronze in six events was as good — or as bad — as going home empty-handed.

But for the Chinese there's always next time so maybe every cloud does have a silver lining — but try telling that to Wayne Gretzky and co.

Philippoussis ousts Rios to set up showdown with Chang

MEMPHIS (AFP) — Fourth-seeded Aussie Mark Philippoussis ousted top seed Marcelo Rios of Chile in straight sets Saturday to line up a clash with Michael Chang in the final of the St. Jude ATP Tour event.

Philippoussis defeated Australian Open finalist Rios 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) to get a shot at the defending champion.

Chang, who edged third-seeded Brazilian Gustavo Kuerten 7-6 (9/7), 7-6 (7/4), will be seeking his first ATP Tour title of the year on his 26th birthday.

Chang saved eight of nine break points during the nearly two-hour match with the reigning French Open champion as he improved his 1998 record to 8-2. He will look to become the first repeat champion at this event since American Todd Martin in 1994-95.

Chang is coming off a semi-final loss to eventual champion Andre Agassi in San Jose, California, last week. He won five ATP Tour titles in 1997, but ended the year on a sour note, dropping seven of his last eight matches. Chang will be gunning for his 32nd career singles title.

Rios, a finalist at the Australian Open, fell to 14-3 this season. He was denied in his bid for his ATP Tour-leading third final of the year.

Real go down in seven-goal thriller

MADRID (AFP) — Real Madrid missed a golden opportunity to increase their lead over rivals Barcelona at the top of the Spanish first division table to four points when they lost a seven-goal thriller at Tenerife Saturday despite twice taking the lead.

With three players sent off and three goals coming from penalties — it was not a match for the faint-hearted.

Real's Redondo was shown the red card with just two minutes left to play after bringing down Dutch frontrunner Makaay, and Real then lost Sanchis sixty seconds later after he was shown his second yellow card.

Tenerife played the last half-an-hour with only ten men after Juanele, who had scored the home side's first goal after 24 minutes, received his marching orders for a second yellow card.

In Saturday's other first division match Valladolid came away 2-1 winners from Sporting Gijon — Chema and Peternac scoring for the visitors early in the first-half and Trotta salvaging a consolation goal for Sporting Gijon in the dying seconds.

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Israel, PNA negotiators to meet for talks today

JERICHO (AFP) — Top Israeli and Palestinian negotiators are due to meet on Monday in an effort to revive talks on implementing interim peace accords, a Palestinian official said on Sunday.

Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat and his Israeli counterpart Danny Naveh will meet in Jericho, but without any U.S. representatives who usually act as mediators in such talks, the official said.

Mr. Erekat and Mr. Naveh held talks on Wednesday in the presence of U.S. Ambassador to Israel Ned Walker in a bid to resume the work of joint committees looking at implementation of interim autonomy accords.

However, their meeting failed to achieve any concrete results.

Among the issues under study by the joint committees are the opening of an airport and seaport in the Gaza Strip, creation of an industrial zone and the establishment of a safe corridor for Palestinians between the West Bank and Gaza.

Mr. Erekat and Mr. Naveh held talks in Washington last week with U.S. officials on ways to revive the peace process after 11 months of stalemate but failed to achieve progress.

But Mr. Erekat said last week that the United States was expected to present within the next two weeks a new initiative to break the deadlock on key issues, particularly further Israeli troop withdrawals from the West Bank.

2 injured in West Bank clash

Arafat hopeful of diplomatic resolution in Iraq-U.N. crisis

GAZA CITY (AP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said Sunday he was hopeful U.N. chief Kofi Annan's efforts would lead to a diplomatic resolution of the Iraq crisis.

Asked about Mr. Annan's trip to Baghdad, Mr. Arafat said: "We hope that they will arrive at a conclusion to get rid of the threat of war." He spoke after meeting with German parliamentarians in Gaza.

In the West Bank, meanwhile, two Palestinians were injured in a clash with Israeli soldiers Sunday after more than a hundred high school students threw rocks at the cars of Jewish settlers and soldiers.

Palestinian witnesses and hospital officials said the soldiers fired live ammunition to disperse the stone-throwers. The army said it was checking those reports.

Samara Qu'ud, 18, was hit in the stomach and was in fair condition after surgery, officials at Ramallah Hospital said. Musa Shalash, 19, was hit in the arm, and was in good condition.

An Israeli army officer and a settler were hurt slightly by stones, the army said.

Four Palestinians were arrested by Israeli soldiers, Palestinian police said. The army said two Palestinians were arrested for throwing stones.

Also Sunday, 14 masked activists of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine burned American, Israeli and British flags at Al Najah university in Nablus. The activists carried a mock Scud missile, pictures of Che Guevara, and fake machine guns and suicide bomber belts.

The Marxist faction was celebrating its 29th anniversary with a rally on campus attended by about 300 people.

Israel criticises travel warnings issued to foreign nationals

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel criticised on Sunday travel warnings issued by several Western countries urging their nationals to consider leaving the Jewish state because of the escalating tension over the Iraq arms crisis.

Canada has joined Australia and the United States in recommending that non-essential diplomats, tourists and business travellers consider departing.

"Instead of advising their respective staff discreetly, Washington and Ottawa have chosen to do so publicly while at the same time ignoring the effect this could have on the Israeli public," a government official told the Jerusalem Post newspaper.

"It makes one wonder if the intention was only to impress [Iraqi President] Saddam [Hussein] with the seriousness of American intentions," the unnamed official added.

Canada's ambassador to Israel, David Berger, rejected the criticism.

"We have family members of diplomats who fear the unknown or who have not been in situations like this, families with small children," he told Israeli military radio.

Israel has in recent days intensified preparations to defend itself against a possible Iraqi attack if the United States decides to use force over President Hussein's refusal to grant full access to U.N. weapons inspectors.

But Israeli security officials have said nevertheless that the chances of an Iraqi attack are slim.

Australia on Sunday advised its citizens not to visit Israel, Kuwait or Jordan and warned those already there to leave because of possible U.S.-led strikes against Iraq.

The Department of Foreign Affairs said the warning was a result of "increasing tensions in the region over developments related to Iraq."

"Security conditions in the region could deteriorate at any time," it said.

The department said Australians "should consider leaving [each] country temporarily unless they have essential commitments requiring their presence there."

The advisory comes a day after Prime Minister John Howard cancelled a four-day trip to Malaysia and Papua New Guinea with less than 24 hours notice, to ensure he is in Australia if war breaks out.

Australia has commited 110 elite Special Air Services (SAS) troops and 80 airforce personnel to the Gulf.

Turkish Islamists seek to regroup after party closure takes effect

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's Islamists were preparing to regroup under a new name and leadership after a court ruling banning their former ruling Welfare Party became official Sunday.

The ruling came into effect when the verdict was published in the Official Gazette.

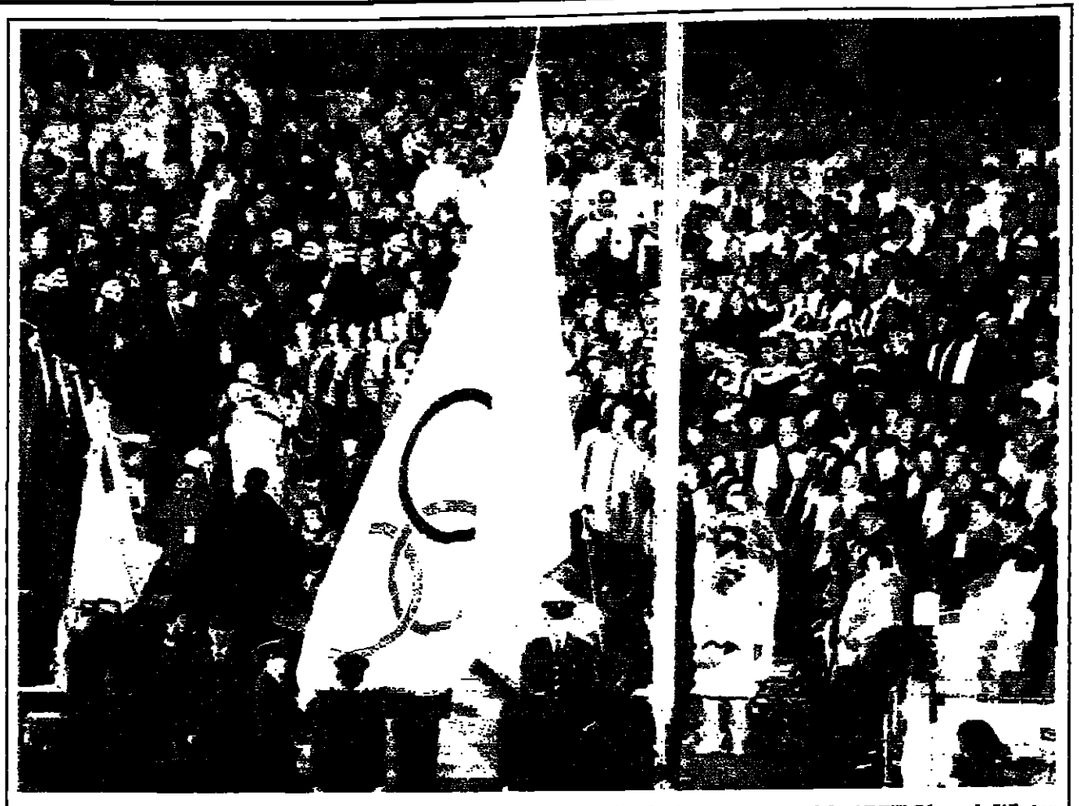
The move also meant that party leader and former Premier Necmettin Erbakan and two of his party aides, who were barred from politics under the Jan. 16 constitutional court verdict, officially lost their seats in parliament and are likely to face trial.

Political analysts said Recai Kutan, a former energy minister and close aide to Mr. Erbakan, and Istanbul's charismatic mayor, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, were the strongest candidates to lead the new Islamist movement.

The court had ruled that Welfare should be dissolved for undermining Turkey's secular regime — a major crime under the country's constitution.

"We will begin getting reorganised next week," Mr. Kutan said.

Welfare officials have already said the Islamists would regroup in either a newly formed Virtue Party, set up by Mr. Erbakan aides, or a new political party. "For the new leadership, Kutan seems to have Erbakan's support, while many in the Islamist camp would prefer Erdogan, whom they think has been highly successful as the mayor of Istanbul," Ankara-based political analyst Dogan Akin told AFP. "Still, Erbakan's choice would be the determining factor for the new leader," he added. Judicial sources said Mr. Erbakan, who lost his parliamentary immunity with his seat, could be charged with trying to overthrow Turkey's secular regime, and would face around 10 years in jail if found guilty.



WINTER OLYMPICS OVER: The Olympic flag is lowered during the closing ceremony of the XVIII Olympic Winter Games Sunday. The city of Nagano sang a joyful sayonara' to the Games and proudly passed the Olympic flag to hosts of the 2002 Winter Games, Salt Lake City (Reuters photo)

90.3% of Saudis against U.S. military action — poll

Anti-U.S. streak in Gulf shows through

DUBAI (R) — A special U.S. envoy sent on a tour of the Arab World to explain Washington's stand against Iraq was jeered and heckled by an audience of more than 200 people in the Gulf, media reports said on Sunday.

At one point, retired Ambassador David Newton asked the audience in the Gulf Arab state of Bahrain — headquarters of the U.S. navy Armada now arrayed against Iraq — whether they thought the united states wanted to kill Iraqi people.

"The audience responded with 'yes, yes' and refused to accept any U.S. justification to attack Iraq," the Gulf Daily News reported.

The U.S. ambassador in the Bahraini capital Manama, Johnny Young, said the United States had not decided yet on using force against Iraq over the arms inspections crisis.

"But the threat is real," the newspaper quoted him as saying at the meeting at a five-star hotel on Saturday.

The incident in Bahrain and other signs of disquiet among Gulf Arabs who are reluctant publicly to back a strike against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein show to what extent opinion in the region has changed since the 1991 Gulf war.

Among the other indications of unease are an unusually strongly worded appeal for peace from the president of the United Arab Emirates and a rare public opinion poll in Saudi Arabia.

UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan, the Gulf's elder statesman, rejected the use of force and said that a U.S. strike could damage current and future relations between East and West and also affect the Gulf.

In Saudi Arabia, a rare public opinion poll published on Saturday showed that 90.3 per cent of Saudis opposed a U.S. strike against Iraq. Some 5.5 per cent supported an attack and the rest gave no response.

The poll by the Saudi-owned newspaper Asharq Al Awsat was conducted among a relatively small sample — 330 men and women in the capital Riyadh among a native population of 12 million.

But the fact that it was conducted at all was remarkable.

"I don't think this has ever been done before in the kingdom," said one veteran Gulf analyst. "It certainly wasn't before the Gulf war."

Asharq Al Awsat said: "The Saudis who got used to the atmosphere of war seven years ago...do not hesitate now to show opposing views to what their stands were in the 1990s."

Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil producer and exporter and Washington's most significant ally in the Gulf region, was the launch pad for the military coalition led by the United States against Iraqi forces who occupied Kuwait in 1990.

King Fahd said last week Saudi Arabia was "eager for all diplomatic means to be exhausted to find an appropriate solution to the crisis." Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan said the kingdom would not allow U.S. air force units to use Saudi bases for an attack.

And an unconfirmed report in the U.S. magazine Aviation Week Space Technology said the kingdom had at least temporarily blocked the U.S. air force from moving aircraft to neighbouring states in preparation for possible strikes.

There have been mixed signals over whether Bahrain would allow its territory to be used for an attack.

A government statement last week said the state "has not allowed the use of its territories for any military action against Iraq."

But the Pentagon said two days later that Bahrain's Emir Sheikh Isa Ben Sulman Al Khalifa had assured President Bill Clinton that U.S. attack jets based in the island state could be used.

Public demonstrations of any sort among the peoples of the conservative Gulf Arab monarchies are extremely rare.

But for some time the rulers have tolerated growing public expression of latent anti-Americanism through editorials and commentaries in newspapers.

Newton jeered, heckled in Bahrain

Popularity of Chirac soars on Iraq stand

PARIS (R) — The popularity of French President Jacques Chirac soared over the past month largely due to his insistence on diplomacy to solve the Iraq crisis, an opinion poll said on Sunday.

The IFOP poll published in the weekly Le Journal du Dimanche said the percentage of French people satisfied with Mr. Chirac rose by nine points to 54 per cent last month.

The figure of those not satisfied fell by eight points to 33 per cent.

IFOP's political analyst Jean-Luc Parodi said Chirac's popularity surged largely due to his stance on the Iraq crisis, in which the United States threatened military action if Iraq did not grant unfettered access to U.N. weapons inspectors.

CIA blamed failed 1961 Cuban invasion on own incompetence

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A declassified Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) internal report on its role in the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba slams the agency for its own incompetence, according to copies of the report made public Sunday.

The CIA misinformed top officials in the John F. Kennedy administration about the operation and treated the exile Cuban rebel leaders heading the invasion as "puppets," according to the report, made public by the National Security Archive, a non-profit organisation that publishes declassified government reports.

The CIA-sponsored invasion of the island by U.S.-based Cuban exiles was designed to topple the government of Cuban President Fidel Castro.

However, the CIA planned the invasion poorly, relied on weak intelligence and had few agents who spoke Spanish or understood Cuba, according to the report, posted on the NSA's Internet web site.

The invasion failed miserably, and after three days of fighting some 1,500 raiders were killed or captured.

The story was spread that the invaders ran out of ammunition as they awaited promised U.S. air strikes that Kennedy refused to authorise.

However the 150-page internal evaluation by CIA Inspector General Lyman Kirkpatrick squarely blamed the CIA itself, not Kennedy, for the disaster.

Among other things, the report notes that:

— The CIA's role in preparations for the "secret" invasion were known to the public, as well as Castro's intelligence officers. By the time the attempted invasion took place "plausible denial [of U.S. support for the invaders] was a pathetic illusion."

— Bases where the anti-Castro exiles met were located in Miami, Key West, New Orleans, Guatemala and Nicaragua. The task of trying to coordinate among them led to communications and organisational chaos.

— The CIA was foolishly convinced that Cubans on the island were ready to rise in arms against Castro and join the invading force. "We can confidently assert that the Agency had no intelligence evidence that Cubans in significant numbers could or would join the invaders," Inspector General Kirkpatrick wrote.

A U.N. chief's deal with Iraq could be a big problem for Clinton, but not Blair

By Paul Taylor
Reuters

LONDON — If U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan achieves a breakthrough in the crisis with Iraq over weapons inspections, he could create a headache for U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Can a scandal-plagued Mr. Clinton, a former anti-Vietnam war activist now draped in the uniform of commander-in-chief, afford to take "yes" for an answer from President Saddam Hussein?

Can Baghdad, which reached a deal brokered by Russia to end a previous crisis last November only to resume obstruction of U.N. arms inspectors, be trusted to keep its word?

Or will any deal that leaves President Hussein power and in control of a suspected arsenal of chemical and biological weapons, albeit open to "unfettered" U.N. inspection, be seen at home as a climb-down by the U.S. president?

"If there is a deal to avert military action, Clinton is going to need a lot of help from his allies, especially Tony Blair, to sell this as a victory," a senior British official said.

The British Prime Minister Blair has been Mr. Clinton's staunchest ally in the crisis while most U.S. allies in the Arab World, as well as France, Russia and China, have opposed the use of force.

But while Mr. Blair would have no domestic problem explaining a deal that averted air strikes, Mr. Clinton is sure to have critics who will argue that he has "allowed Saddam to get away with it" once again.

That problem could be compounded if the arrangement worked out by Mr. Annan contained any commitment to review U.N. economic sanctions against Iraq at some later date in the light of progress in the weapons inspections.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright appeared to refer to that possibility on Sunday by saying: "It is possible that he will come with something we don't like, in which case we will pursue our national interest."

Clinton administration officials have been saying for days that Washington could reject any deal that they deemed inconsistent with U.N. resolutions or with U.S. national security interests.

But despite those tough words, it is hard to imagine the United States bombing Iraq after Mr. Annan has proclaimed he has a fair deal which other Security Council members would be likely to support.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook broke ranks with Washington on Sunday by saying that sanctions could be dismantled soon if President Hussein implemented a satisfactory accord with the United Nations.

"If he really is willing this time to cooperate, that could be done in the fairly near future," Mr. Cook told BBC Radio.

That runs counter to Ms. Albright's insistence last year that sanctions would stay in place for as long as it took to get rid of President Hussein.

It also raises the question of how the Western powers will respond if U.N. weapons inspectors, who have been chafing at the gates of President Hussein's palaces and presidential compounds for months, fail to find the tell-tale evidence they think is hidden there once they are let in.

"The French are bound to say sanctions should then be lifted. The Americans are sure to say the Iraqis have used all that time during which they were stalling to shift things to other places," a European diplomat said.

U.N. spokesmen have said any agreement reached by Mr. Annan would have to be in writing, signed by Iraq and accepted by the Security Council.

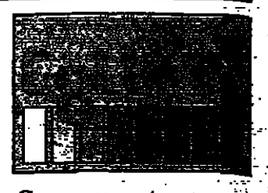
Mr. Cook said it would be enshrined in a new Security Council resolution, and diplomats say the Americans are insisting that should contain a "snapback clause" allowing for immediate military action without further diplomacy if the accord were violated.

Even if the other Security Council members signed up to such a clause, which is far from certain, the United States and Britain might have to keep their big air-naval force in the Gulf for months at great expense with no clear "exit strategy."

Analysts say President Hussein could bide his time and pick some other option to reassert himself, as he did by sending troops into northern Iraq in 1996.

"There's absolutely nothing to stop this breaking out again in a few months' time," said Harold Walker, the last British ambassador to Iraq in 1990-91.

"In international affairs, the norm is that things are messy. Diplomatic solutions are rarely clear and military action would be a very poor second best to keeping UNSCOM inspectors on the ground," he said.



Connery not considered worthy of knighthood

LONDON (AFP) — Despite being one of the most successful members of Her Majesty's Secret Service, actor Sean Connery is not considered worthy of a knighthood because of his political activities, the Mail on Sunday reported. Connery, 67, is an active supporter of the Scottish Nationalist Party which advocates independence for Scotland. When his name was put forward for a knighthood in the 1998 New Year's Honours, it was reportedly blackballed by the Labour government's Scottish Secretary Donald Dewar and one of his junior ministers. Scottish-born Connery told the paper he was "deeply disappointed but strangely not angry or greatly surprised. I have never hidden my political leanings in terms of Scotland from way back."

British Queen Elizabeth to recruit media spin doctor

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's Queen Elizabeth is to recruit a media spin doctor in a bid to improve the image of the royal family, a press report said. The decision to hire a royal director of communications comes in the wake of alarming findings by pollsters commissioned by Buckingham Palace, the Sunday Times reported. The surveys found the royal family to be remote, out of touch, wasteful, lacking in understanding, poor value for money and badly advised, the paper said.

Five-year-old girl arrested, charged in Florida

PENSACOLA (R) — A five-year-old Florida girl was placed under arrest on felony charges this month for allegedly biting and scratching a teacher, education officials said. Barbara Frye, a spokeswoman for the Escambia County School District, said the girl, Chaquita Doman, went into a rage before attacking a kindergarten support teacher who tried to calm her. The girl faces a felony charge of battery of an elected official or educator. She was released into the care of her parents, who told reporters the charges were ludicrous.

Stuttgart encouraging people to grab mops and brooms

STUTTGART (AFP) — Stuttgart is encouraging people to grab their mops and brooms next month in a bid to set a record for the world's biggest spring cleaning. An association called "Stuttgart, Clean and Safe" has launched the March 25-28 campaign in which participants armed with cleaning equipment will try to smarten up every city street and corner. The cleanup campaign backed by the city hall is aimed at earning Stuttgart a world record for the cleanest city and as an awareness drive, said Brigitte Haussmann-Rudolf, who heads the association.

Spanish youths sentenced to read books for scooter violations

MADRID (AFP) — Youths caught driving scooters recklessly in a town in southern Spain can pay a traditional fine or undergo a novel form of punishment — promising to read a book. That's how authorities in Benalmadena are trying to keep their roads safe and their teens cultured, the newspaper El Mundo said. Those stopped for speeding or otherwise driving recklessly can pay a fine or pledge to read a book supplied by the library. They have 30 days to do it. After that the convict is supposed to go back to library and answer a questionnaire designed to show if he or she has in fact digested the tome.